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During the late 1960s and the 1970s, there was a vast upsurge in the social and spiritual appeal of what might best be referred to as non-mainstream religious and therapeutic movements. This was in part a byproduct of the far-reaching "do your own thing" spirit associated with the 60's counterculture, and in part a reflection of the renewed "search for meaning" undertaken by many affluent and highly educated youths in industrial societies, both in the West and elsewhere, who sought to fill a perceived spiritual or psychological void in their lives. This unique cultural climate, coupled with recently relaxed immigration laws, made it possible for the leaders of many newly-established religious movements, domestic and foreign, to acquire a substantial following in the United States and Europe. The most famous of these were Sun-Myung Moon's Unification Church, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Moses Berg's Children of God (COG), the Church of Scientology, the People's Temple of Jim Jones, and the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's movement.

Given the constitutional protections for freedom of religion and the religious diversity that have long been characteristic of America, the appearance and proliferation of these somewhat peculiar new religious movements was not initially perceived as a threat, serious or otherwise, by the American public. Only religious and social conservatives affiliated with various fundamentalist sects or dogmatic subgroups within mainstream religious denominations, who were especially concerned with defending Judeo-Christian doctrinal orthodoxy against the seductive "false dogmas" and "bizarre rites" of new religious groups they viewed as "counterfeit" pseudo-religions, if not as "heretical" or "satanic" forces, were truly alarmed. These intolerant and often persecuto-

rial religious zealots, who are now referred to collectively by scholars as the "counter-cult movement" (hereafter CCM), quickly established a number of organizations that were devoted to denigrating and indeed demonizing non-mainstream religious movements, most often by disseminating lurid, sensational accounts about their "corrupt" beliefs and "sinister" practices.⁽¹⁾ Because of their narrow focus on preserving religious orthodoxy and the blatant bigotry they often displayed toward any and all non-believers, these "counter-cult" activists were not at first able to attract many allies from outside their own circles.

However, once the close personal relatives of a growing number of American and European citizens started joining these unfamiliar new religious organizations, in the process sometimes cutting themselves off completely from their own families and close friends, legitimate concerns about the real nature of these groups inevitably began to surface. These concerns, which were periodically intensified by sensationalistic fear-mongering and paranoid conspiracy theorizing, became even more pronounced after disaffected individual members began abandoning these movements, returning to their "normal" lives, and providing insider accounts that revealed sordid details about their respective doctrines, organizational structures, financial operations, social activities, and internal control mechanisms. These disillusioned former cult members, who were soon dubbed "apostates" by their critics, expressed profound regrets about their previous association with such groups, which they felt had manipulated them psychologically, isolated them socially, exploited them economically, and, in some cases, even abused them physically or sexually. Once these horror stories — whether factual or fanciful — began circulating more widely, concerned relatives

and friends of people still affiliated with these groups began organizing grassroots counter-movements to oppose what they had increasingly come to view as "destructive" cults whose leaders had made use of "mind control" techniques to "brainwash" and enslave their own followers. Thus was born the so-called "anti-cult movement" (hereafter ACM). As the 1970s wore on, many of these local and group-specific citizens action groups began to coalesce into larger umbrella organizations whose purpose was provide psychological support to their members, exchange information, enlist the aid of the media to publicize their cause and influence public opinion, and alert local, state, and federal regulatory agencies about the myriad dangers they felt these cults posed, both to the individual and to society at large. By the 1980s, the most important of these umbrella groups were the American Family Foundation (AFF) and the Cult Awareness Network (CAN).⁽²⁾

So far, so good. Forming citizen lobbies is as American as apple pie. It is perfectly understandable that people would become concerned when their loved ones suddenly ran off to join religious communes, adopted seemingly strange new worldviews, and divorced themselves wholly or in part from their closest associates (not to mention mainstream society), and under these circumstances it isn't at all surprising that some of them would thence organize groups to discuss their concerns and seek to respond effectively to these traumatic developments. But problems arose when others sought to exploit these legitimate concerns in order to promote their own religious agendas or commercial enrichment. Here I am referring primarily to CCM activists, on the one hand, and so-called "deprogrammers", on the other, who sought with varying degrees of success to make common cause with the ACM, at

The cult

times with the unwitting assistance of naïve or desperate ACM activists themselves, and therefore tended to become associated with the latter movement in the eyes of the public. Unlike the CCM, however, the ACM was made up of a broad cross-section of concerned citizens, including religious, non-religious, and even anti-religious people, whose objections to religious cults were rationalized — usually honestly but sometimes, especially after it was infiltrated by counter-cult activists, for tactical reasons — on *secular* rather than religious grounds.

For their part, deprogrammers were individuals who — usually for a substantial fee — offered to “rescue” loved ones that had been ensnared by dangerous and deceptive cults, if necessary by using force, and then to reverse the programming they had been subjected to by cult leaders. Most deprogrammers were not psychiatrists or certified psychologists, much less experts on techniques of coercive persuasion and thought reform, but rather independent entrepreneurs drawn from the ranks of private investigators and bounty hunters. Whatever their background, they soon became notorious for forcibly abducting members of cults and subjecting them to harsh psychological treatment in an effort to restore their “true” personalities. The Manson Family criminal trial had already reintroduced the concept of “brainwashing” into popular discourse, and it was the attribution of sophisticated brainwashing techniques to religious cults that provided a justification for kidnapping and “deprogramming” their adult members. However, the abuses associated with individual deprogrammers such as Ted Patrick, and indeed with the entire process of deprogramming, soon brought civil libertarians and self-styled defenders of religious freedom into the fray.(3)

The battle lines were now drawn, and the



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part one

battle was soon joined. On one side were the "cult-bashers" and "cult-busters", some of them academic experts, who believed that these peculiar fringe groups were dangerous and destructive pseudo-religions which subjected their members to "coercive persuasion", and on the other side were the "cult apologists", above all civil libertarians, proponents of near absolute freedom of religion, and a coterie of scholars who studied what

views already existed, both among the NRMs themselves and among their opponents, and they contributed mightily to the acrimonious tenor of the debates in which scholars later became involved. Third, by the end of the 1980s several high profile scandals involving a number of so-called "cults" — including the Manson Family's brutal murders (and purported links to the satanist Process Church of the Final Judgement), the use of violence by Synanon members against some vocal opponents, the COG's use of prostitution ("flirty fishing") to recruit adherents, the "Koreagate" scandal involving the Unification Church, the mass murder/suicide at Jonestown, the attempt by Rajneeshpuram leaders to poison their Oregon neighbors, the involvement of a "dirty tricks" section established by the Church of

more recent times, given the tragic siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, the mass suicides instigated by Heaven's Gate and the Order of the Solar Temple, and Aum Shinrikyo's launching of covert chemical and biological warfare attacks in Japan.) Fourth, the financial inducements offered to academic investigators, both by NRMs to "facilitate" (i.e., influence) their research and by various parties in exchange for testifying in court cases, has resulted in a situation where vested financial interest may have led to the corruption of scholarly integrity. Finally, certain parties in this debate appear to have hidden agendas of a personal, political, or religious nature, agendas which are still not entirely clear.

This bitter scholarly (and not so scholarly) conflict over the nature of NRMs has ebbed and flowed over the years, with each side having acquired the upper hand for a time. In the wake of the Jonestown tragedy, those scholars and groups that had developed strongly negative attitudes toward religious cults succeeded in influencing popular perceptions and provoking government agencies to convene hearings,

they themselves referred to as New Religious Movements (NRMs) rather than cults. During the 1970s these same scholars had published a number of books, both about NRMs in general and about particular groups, almost all of which were extremely sympathetic toward the non-mainstream religions under investigation. Two leading members of this group of NRM specialists, Anson Shupe and David Bromley, also published the very first study of the ACM, *The New Vigilantes*, whose biases were clearly reflected in the book's title. Under normal circumstances a scholarly dispute about the applicability of the "brainwashing" concept and the group dynamics of religious sects would have been carried out in a relatively sober, even-tempered fashion, but in this case several factors mitigated against such a civil debate.

First, the conflict between NRMs and their opponents had already become highly charged and polemical even before scholars began to involve themselves in it, and for obvious reasons. It's hardly surprising that when such fundamental core values as a concern for the welfare of family members and close friends, on the one hand, and a concern for the preservation of religious liberty, on the other, come into conflict, strong emotions will surface and tempers will flare. Second, groups with extremist

Scientology (the so-called Guardian

Department) in a wide array of illegal operations, and the murder of defectors carried out by ISKCON members — had already made it impossible for anyone to view these controversial matters in a detached way. (This problem has scarcely been alleviated in

if not in outlawing certain deceptive intragroup practices or stripping various movements of their "religious" status. During this period, roughly between 1978 and 1986, the "cult apologists" who strongly sympathized with the NRMs they studied tended to view themselves as a beleaguered minority within the academic community.

However, after redoubling their efforts to resist what they perceived as ever-growing threats to religious liberty, and by successfully refuting the most outlandish charges levelled against particular NRMs by the CCM and ACM, they were eventually able to swing the pendulum back in the other direction and establish a kind of intellectual orthodoxy in the field of religious

studies. This became clear in the wake of the decision in an important court case, *Molko and Leal v. the Holy Spirit Association* (in which the California Supreme Court refused to convict the group of "brainwashing" the two plaintiffs because the existence of coercive persuasion remained a

"factual question" that even social scientists could not agree upon), when they sought to persuade respectable academic bodies like the Social Science Research Council, the American Psychological Association, and the American Sociological Association to file *amicus curie* briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the Holy Spirit Association. These partisan briefs concluded that there was "no evidence to suggest that anything can substitute for physical coercion in the process of 'coercive persuasion'", and falsely claimed that "all available research refutes any such claim." As one critic has charged, in reference to most of the NRM scholarship published between 1987 and the late 1990s, it had become politically correct to "defend NRMs and to attack those who argued that some NRM members may have been brainwashed." (4)

It is not my purpose in this short introduction to resolve these exceedingly thorny matters in a definitive fashion and thereby end the acrimonious disputes between scholars, but simply to illuminate the context within which the "cult" wars have been fought. However, I

cated new techniques of psychological manipulation that were capable of transforming previously normal individuals into mindless automatons or robots who could be controlled against their will by others, themes which were popularized in the media and dramatized in some truly innovative films, most notably "The Manchurian Candidate". Not surprisingly, the most sensational and extravagant claims that were made about brainwashing in the popular press were later demolished, undermined, or substantially revised by social psychologists, who examined the actual evidence and thence developed various models to describe the actual multi-phase process of what they referred to as "thought reform", "coercive persuasion", or "mentacide" rather than "brainwashing". (5)

In recent years academic apologists for NRMs have repeatedly (and often disingenuously) sought to banish the term "brainwashing" from scholarly discourse by undermining the legitimacy of the entire concept, either by attacking straw men (e.g., untenable journalistic caricatures of the process that no serious

robbed of their will...[but rather that] resocialization remaps the values and preferences of the subject so that the subject voluntarily chooses to do what the group wants him to do. The goal of brainwashing is to create deployable agents...There is nothing in the definition to imply that brainwashing is easy to accomplish, always effective, or impossible to resist...[On the contrary,] *brainwashing is likely to always remain a relatively rare phenomenon because of the difficulty of achieving a high degree of milieu control and charismatic influence necessary to make it effective* (emphasis added)." (6) Some would go even further and argue that brainwashing involves systematically breaking down key features of an individual's personality structure, and one of the best analyses of thought reform in relation to cults has made a useful distinction between social control organizations that attack *central* elements of the self and those that only attack *peripheral* elements of the self. Obviously, the former are capable of causing far more psychological damage, both in the short term and the long term. (7)

believe that much of this ongoing debate misses the point entirely, both because some scholars have been genuinely duped and because others have knowingly engaged in dissimulation and distortion. The core questions at issue are 1) whether something that can be termed "brainwashing" exists at all, and 2) whether certain NRMs make extensive use of it to control their followers. The answer to both of these questions is clearly yes, as anyone who is familiar with the literature and possesses a modicum of common sense should be able to recognize.

The term "brainwashing" was first coined by a journalist in the mid-1950s to explain why a number of Allied POWs captured during the Korean War had publicly denounced their own countries and societies on enemy radio broadcasts, using phraseology that was typical of official Chinese communist propaganda campaigns. Most of the POWs who did so immediately repudiated their actions upon returning home, and admitted that they had been tortured and coerced into saying such treasonous things, but some returning POWs acted as if they remained in a state of shock and continued to parrot the same enemy rhetoric for some time after being released from captivity. This generated widespread fears that the Chinese communists had developed sophisti-

scholar has ever accepted) or by claiming that the early models developed by social scientists in connection with communist POWs were inapplicable in the context of NRMs, since the latter's social control mechanisms supposedly did not include physical imprisonment or coercion. Aside from the fact that a considerable number of cult-like groups *have* employed physical coercion — up to and including murder — and/or forcible confinement in an effort to control recalcitrant followers, the available evidence indicates that a complex array of manipulative psychological practices can be characterized as coercive, and that if these practices are employed consciously and systematically there's no reason why they should not be labelled "brainwashing" (or "coercive persuasion", etc.) — provided that scholars carefully delimit the meaning of that term.

A fair effort to clarify the meaning of the concept has recently been made by Benjamin Zablocki, one of the first social scientists to carry out extensive fieldwork on non-mainstream religious and social groups. According to Zablocki, "brainwashing is to be understood as nothing more than an orchestrated process of ideological conversion that takes its subjects through a well-defined sequence of social psychological stages...the brainwashing conjecture does not assert that subjects are

In any event, outside of totalitarian societies and prisons, where the highest degrees of authoritarian milieu control are possible, very few social organizations are able to achieve sufficient levels of milieu control and charismatic influence to successfully engage in "thought reform". Among those that actually *have* the capacity to do so are communal religious, political, or psychotherapeutic groups with charismatic leaders, especially those which espouse apocalyptic, world-transformative ideologies and whose headquarters or compounds are geographically isolated. A "religious cult" can therefore be defined, in the strict sense of the term, as a NRM which systematically employs well-known techniques of coercive persuasion, irrespective of the precise nature of its theological doctrines.

When it comes to assessing whether particular small-scale social organizations, non-mainstream or otherwise, are bona fide cults, or whether they merely display certain cult-like features, all one needs to do is pay careful attention to their internal social control mechanisms and authority structures. This is not all that hard to do if as long as one remains skeptical about the claims of leaders and true believers, is allowed to conduct fieldwork or at least observe the group for a time, is able to obtain detailed inside information from pre-

sent and former members (above all apostates who, having become alienated from their former group, are more likely to retrospectively notice particular manifestations of manipulation and authoritarianism), and knows what telltale signs to look for. In the case of religious groups, the following can all be viewed as warning signs:

- a) selective recruitment of psychologically vulnerable targets
- b) initial deception concerning group affiliation and purposes
- c) application of extreme and often degrading forms of peer group pressure, including forced public "confessions"
- d) ongoing isolation from mainstream society (especially relatives and friends) at retreats
- e) sensory overload
- f) sleep and protein deprivation
- g) constant surveillance or enforced lack of privacy
- h) exploitation of labor (12-16 hour work days)
- i) confiscation of personal assets
- j) intense ideological indoctrination
- k) sexual exploitation
- l) physical abuse and imprisonment
- m) authoritarian forms of charismatic leadership

Religious, therapeutic, political, or hybrid groups that possess all or most of these characteristics can legitimately be categorized as thought reform cults, whereas those that exhibit only a few of these traits can perhaps best be described as "cult-like" or potentially "cultic". To portray groups with these characteristics as nothing more than "harmless" alternative religions and "innocent" victims of religious persecution, as NRM scholars almost invariably do, defies all logic.

Perhaps the most egregious example of this sort of embarrassing sophistry can be seen in the astonishing reaction of several leading NRM scholars to the belated police crackdown on members of the apocalyptic Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan. Even before this dramatic finale, as evidence was slowly but surely mounting that the group had murdered both adherents and opponents, and that it was testing, producing, and actually using chemical and biological agents to attack civilians, several Japanese experts on NRMs, most notably Hiromi Shimada and Shin'ichi Nakazawa, publicly defended the group and complained that its members were being unjustly targeted by the authorities. This was not merely a distortion of reality, but a complete reversal of the true situation: the authorities were in fact absurdly *lax* in terms of their response to the growing threat posed by the group. Still more incredibly, even *after* Aum leaders had been charged with attempted mass murder and their followers began to be arrested, a delegation of four Americans, including two leading NRM

apologists, J. Gordon Melton (head of the Institute for the Study of American Religions [ISAR] at the University of California at Santa Barbara) and James R. Lewis (the founder of the Association of World Academics for Religious Education [AWARE], a group that claims to be a religious variant of Amnesty International), flew to Japan *at Aum's expense* to conduct an investigation and defend the group's freedom of religion. Although both initially criticized the mass arrests and detentions of Aum members by the police, Melton later concluded that the cult's leaders were guilty as charged (although he claimed that many members were themselves innocent victims). Lewis, on the other hand, had been completely duped by several deceptive Aum leaders he interacted with, so much so that, despite all evidence to the contrary, he ended up concluding that Aum Shinrikyo was a victim of religious persecution and state repression!(8) If ever there was a group that could justly be characterized as a "destructive cult" and that deserved to be harshly suppressed by the government, it was Aum Shinrikyo. Fortunately, the evidence against Aum was so overwhelming that the utterly ludicrous opinions of these experts, who have apparently never encountered a NRM they didn't admire, were ignored. In the future, the rest of us may not be so lucky. One can only hope that assorted cult apologists won't deter the authorities from taking necessary action the next time a religious cult is producing and preparing to use weapons of mass destruction

In order to shed further light on these important matters we have decided to reprint three interesting articles which reflect various aspects of the current phase of the "cult" wars. The first consists of a discourse on the the historical connections between satanist and vampire panics by Massimo Introvigne, the director of the Centro studi sulle nuove religioni (CESNUR: Center for the Study of New Religions) in Turin. Not only is this an interesting scholarly treatment of an intrinsically fascinating and potentially illuminating topic, but it also epitomizes many of the central themes that are nowadays being promoted by NRM researchers who fancy themselves to be righteous defenders of religious liberty and pluralism. Introvigne's concern is above all with documenting the fraudulent foundations of satanism and vampirism scares that have in the past led to persecutorial responses, whether by the state or by private citizens, since similar types of misperceptions of, and overreactions to, the "threats" posed by unpopular fringe groups can easily precipitate new bouts of anti-religious bigotry and persecution. Lest anyone think that such hysteria is a thing of the past, Introvigne reminds us of the recent "satanic panic" that swept over the United States in the 1980s and early 1990s, a

phenomenon which bore many of the hallmarks of past "witch hunts" but fortunately lacked official sponsorship or enough popular support to lead to serious persecutions. On the face of it, then, there is nothing at all objectionable about Introvigne's analysis, and most readers of a civil libertarian or libertine persuasion will probably find themselves in agreement with his basic conclusions. I certainly did. Having said that, there may well be much more involved here than a simple scholarly interpretation couched in the language of individual rights and religious freedom.

The second article was originally delivered at an academic conference by Professor Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi of the University of Haifa. In this presentation Beit-Hallahmi deals head-on with one of the central issues alluded to above, namely, the blatant partisanship and lack of objectivity among certain circles of sociologists of religion, who tend to view NRMs as allies in the fight for religious freedom (or, at least, as potential external sources of research funding) rather than as objects of detached scientific investigation. Not only does he cite tangible evidence of improper collusion between scholars and NRMs, in the form of an memo [written, though he doesn't identify the author, prepared by Professor Jeffrey Hadden of Virginia Commonwealth University] recommending tangible collaboration with the Unification Church, but he also rightly highlights the foolish and potentially dangerous attempts by certain well-known cult apologists to defend Aum Shinrikyo against very well-founded and thoroughly documented charges that it repeatedly attacked innocent civilians using weapons of mass destruction. Clearly, Beit-Hallahmi's paper should give pause to those who believe that arcane scholarly controversies never have any impact on real-world events.

The third and final article, authored by Herman De Tolla and excerpted from a Dutch ecology publication, provides some eye-opening details about peculiar events that transpired at a conference on NRMs sponsored by CESNUR, the organization headed by Massimo Introvigne. A public outcry erupted when it was learned that one of the speakers at the conference was a leading member of the very same NRM she was scheduled to give a paper on, especially since the organization in question happened to be New Acropolis, an international far right occultist group with paramilitary proclivities. This controversy in turn prompted De Tolla to provide a bit of information on the nature of CESNUR and the possible bases of its pro-cult stance. Unfortunately, in this particular article he barely managed to scratch the surface of this extraordinarily complex issue, since it turns out that Introvigne's background is very curious indeed. That is a subject to which we shall return in an

-Jeff Bale

ENDNOTES:

(1) For more on the CCM, see the unsympathetic account of J. Gordon Melton, *The Evangelical Christian Anti-Cult Movement: Christian Counter-Cult Literature* (New York: Garland, 1990). For examples of religiously-inspired counter-cult literature, see Bob Larson, *Larson's New Book of Cults* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1989); Ronald Enroth et al, *A Guide to Cults and New Religions* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1983).

(2) For the ACM, see the unsympathetic studies by Anson Shupe & David G. Bromley, "The Modern North American Anti-Cult Movement, 1971-91: A Twenty-Year Retrospective", in idem, eds., *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York & London: Garland, 1994), pp. 3-31; idem, *The New Vigilantes: Anti-Cultists, Deprogrammers, and the New Religions* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980). A good example of ACM literature is by the founder of the AFF (and the editor of its journal, the *Cultic Studies Journal*), Michael D. Langone, *Destructive Cultism: Questions and Answers* (Weston, MA: American Family Foundation, 1982).

(3) For radically different points of view concerning the morality, legality, and efficacy of deprogramming, see Ted Patrick, *Let Our Children Go!* (New York: Ballantine, 1976); David G. Bromley & James T. Richardson, eds., *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal, and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1983);

(4) See Benjamin Zablocki, "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion", *Nova Religio* 1:1 (October 1997), p. 108.

(5) The term "brainwashing" was apparently first coined by the journalist Edward Hunter, author of *Brainwashing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men's Minds* (New York: Vanguard, 1956). For early scholarly studies of "thought reform", "coercive persuasion", and "mentacide", based primarily on the experiences of Korean War POWs, see, respectively, Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1989); Edgar Schein & C.H. Barker, *Coercive Persuasion* (New York: Norton, 1961); and Joost Meerloo, *The Rape of the Mind* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1956).

(6) Zablocki, "Blacklisting of a Concept", pp. 102-5.

(7) Richard Ofshe & Margaret Singer, "Attacks on Peripheral versus Central Elements of the Self and the Impact of Coercive Persuasion", *Cultic Studies Journal* 3:1 (1986), pp. 3-24. It should be pointed out that for

several years I served, while still a graduate student at Berkeley, as the teaching assistant for a course on thought reform and cults that was offered by Professor Ofshe. Compare also Philip Zimbardo & Susan Anderson, "Understanding Mind Control: Exotic and Mundane Mental Manipulations", in *Recovery from Cults: Help for Victims of Psychological and Spiritual Abuse*, ed. by Michael D. Langone (New York: Norton, 1983), pp. 104-25.

(8) For a devastating critique of the behavior of NRM scholars in connection with the Aum affair, see Ian Reader, "Scholarship, Aum Shinrikyo, and Academic Integrity", *Nova Religio* 3:2 (April 2000), pp. 368-82. Reader is also the author of the most thorough and insightful book on this subject, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2000). For the incredibly misguided interpretation of the Aum affair by James Lewis of AWARE, see "Japan's Waco: Aum Shinrikyo and the Eclipse of Freedom in the Land of the Rising Sun", *Prevailing Winds* 2 (1995), pp. 52-8.

Satanism Scares and Vampirism from the 18th Century to the Contemporary Anti-Cult Movement

by Massimo Introvigne

[a paper presented at the World Dracula Congress, Los Angeles 1997]

Do vampires really exist? And what does this question really mean? Vampirology has been for centuries a chapter of demonology, and vampire scares have a number of connections with Satanism scares. I will, accordingly, first summarize the history of Satanism scares in recent European and American history and then, in a second part of this paper, explore the history of vampirology.

I. Satanism Scares

In 1993 sociologist Jeffrey S. Victor published a book on allegation of Devil worship and Satanism in the United States. On the first page of the book, Victor noted that "some really bizarre things have been happening in this country. These strange happenings may be omens of one of the biggest secret conspiracies, or one of the biggest hoaxes, in recent history"[1].

These "bizarre things" were not happening for the first time. Satanism scares have occurred repeatedly in the modern Western world. Although vampire scares have an origin independent from

Satanism scares, the two phenomena have a cultural connection. It is, accordingly, worthwhile to offer first, an overview of modern Satanism scares, and second, a summary of the connections between each main Satanism scare and vampires.

1. Satanism and Anti-Satanism:

A Historical Overview

If we define Satanism as the organized worship of what the Bible identifies as Satan or the Devil, by groups which are organized as religious or magical movements, historians agree that Satanism is not a very ancient phenomenon. Rumors of Devil worship surfaced during witchcraft trials in the late 17th century, but there was no suggestion that organized and hierarchical satanic cults existed. The first satanic cult which possibly existed was operated by Catherine La Voisin at the Court of the French monarch Louis XIV. Although some historians are skeptical, the documents of the inquiry by Nicholas de la Reynie, the Police Chief of the king — who was not a particularly religious man but a rather cold and stubborn policeman — published by the 19th century historian François Ravaisson-Mollien, make a persuasive case for the celebration of "Black Masses" (the term was coined by La Voisin herself) at the Court of Louis XIV. "Black Masses" were described as rituals mocking the Roman Catholic Mass, in which Catholic hosts were desecrated through sex rituals and children were occasionally sacrificed to the Devil in order to obtain power and love for the wealthy customers of La Voisin [2]. La Reynie's police effectively destroyed the cult, but the emerging press made the incident infamous for decades in Europe and copycat imitations surfaced during the 18th century and during the French Revolution. These episodes were connected by pious Catholic authors to the Revolution itself, which they believed had been masterminded by anti-Catholic Satanists.

Between 1800 and 1865 more than thirty influential works exposing a widespread Satanist conspiracy were published in France and in other countries [3]. New religious movements such as Spiritualism and Mormonism were also believed to be the creation of the Devil and part of the worldwide satanic conspiracy. For example, the anti-Spiritualist Orestes Brownson (1803-1876) expressed his opinion in the United States that only Satan could have been the real author of the Book of Mormon [4]. His theories were adapted in Europe by the Paris lawyer Joseph Bizouard (1797-1870)

in his six-volume anti-Satanist work published in 1864, which became one of the most influential books in the French anti-Satanism scare of the 1860s [5]. In the meantime — in the second half of the 19th century — an occult subculture flourished in Paris and Lyon, including both non-satanic and satanic occult societies (some of them operated by defrocked Catholic priests). Journalist Jules Bois (1868-1943) and novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907) explored this underworld, and Huysmans published in 1891 a famous novel on Satanism, *Là-bas*, which included one of the most famous literary descriptions of a Black Mass [6]. The Satanists of the 1880s were not invented by Huysmans; they existed, but there were — admittedly — only a few members in two or three small cults in France and Belgium [7]. Again, public opinion overreacted and — in the wake of the success of *Là-bas* — sensational revelations on a worldwide satanic conspiracy were offered to the French public by Dr. Charles Hacks, a medical doctor writing under the pen name of “Dr. Bataille”. Hacks published his huge *Le Diable au XIXe siècle*, whose two volumes appeared between 1892 and

ing scrutiny by both Freemasons (including the British Masonic encyclopedist Arthur Edward Waite, 1857-1942) [10] and Catholics (particularly the Jesuit press in France and Germany). The Jesuits were actively engaged in the anti-Masonic campaign but, at the same time, did not trust Taxil. He was finally pressured to introduce the public to the elusive Diana Vaughan (who had never been seen) or admit that her existence was merely a literary device. In 1897 Taxil confessed at a conference in Paris that there was no Palladism or any worldwide satanic conspiracy at all; his own conversion to Catholicism had been a hoax which he had conceived in order to convince the world how gullible the anti-Masonic Catholics of his time actually were [11].

Although a body of literature inspired by the Taxil fraud continued to be published well into our century (including *L'Élu du Dragon*, a 1929 book claiming that U.S. President James Abram Garfield (1831-1881) had replaced Albert Pike as chief of the worldwide satanic conspiracy shortly before his assassination in 1881) [12], anti-Satanism was largely discredited after the

LaVey's Church of Satan and its main splinter group — the Temple of Set, whose leader is Michael Aquino — are the largest satanic organizations in the world. They are not large. Their combined active membership (not to be confused with their mailing lists) does not exceed one thousand people and is probably even smaller [15]. LaVey's notoriety did have a role in the early stages of the latest anti-Satanist campaign, which can only be understood within the framework of the larger anti-cult propaganda of the 1970s and 1980s.

Summing up, from the Court of Louis XIV to contemporary California the pendulum has periodically swung between Satanism and anti-Satanism. Smaller satanic cults have existed from time to time and have produced — since Satanism is, by definition, intolerable — gross overreactions in the form of Satanism scares. The success of these anti-Satanist campaigns has been self-limited by their own exaggerations. The fact that each wave of anti-Satanism has been discredited has allowed new satanic cults to operate for a while, creating in turn a new overreaction, and so on.

1894, with the help of journalist Léo Taxil, whose real name was Gabriel Jogand (1854-1907) and who had announced with much fanfare his conversion from Freemasonry and anti-clericalism to Catholicism in 1885 [8].

Taxil supplemented Bataille's stories with more of his own, and the whole affair became increasingly wild. Taxil claimed to be the spokesman for Diana Vaughan, a High Priestess of Lucifer who was converting to Catholicism. Vaughan — whose name appeared as editor of a monthly journal published in Paris, *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* — revealed that a huge satanic organization called Palladism was behind Freemasonry, Spiritualism, occultism and new religious movements, including the then controversial Salvation Army and Mormonism. The arch-rival of Diana was another American girl named Sophie Walder, who had been appointed High Priestess of Lucifer in competition with Diana by the satanic Pope himself, the prominent American freemason Albert Pike (1809-1891) [9]. Eventually, Taxil's stories about Diana Vaughan came under increas-

infamous Taxil hoax. When in the 1930s Russian-born occultist Maria de Naglowska (1883-1936) established an openly satanic cult in Paris, the press was more amused than scandalized, and some newspapers characterized Naglowska's Satanism as an interesting religious experiment [13]. The international press was less kind when British magus Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) shocked his contemporaries by styling himself “the Beast 666” and “the wickedest man in the world”. Crowley made use of satanic imagery and is still regarded by many as the founding father of contemporary Satanism. The British occultist, however, was a magical atheist who did not believe in the actual existence of Satan; and although he has been influential on later satanic movements, he could not be regarded as a Satanist in the narrow, technical sense of the term [14]. On the other hand, it is true that Crowley enthusiasts — including movie director Kenneth Anger — were instrumental in founding the Church of Satan in San Francisco in 1966, whose notorious spokesman is the former carnival performer Anton Szandor LaVey. To this day

2. Anti-Cult and Counter-Cult

Movements

The success of the latest Satanism scare in the 1980s can only be understood as a peculiar development in the history of movements which have been created to fight the so-called “cults”. Anti-cult movements are not new in American history. In the 19th century nativist organizations devoted to the defense of a Protestant America labeled as “cults” three groups perceived as quintessentially hostile to the American way of life: Freemasonry, Roman Catholicism, and Mormonism [16]. New entries were gradually added — Seventh-Day Adventists, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses — while Catholics and Mormons were eventually accepted by most Americans as part of the mainstream of the national religious life and anti-Masonism became marginalized. By the end of World War II, hostility towards “cults” was reduced to a bigoted fringe of American Fundamentalism. The situation, however, changed in the 1960s with the emergence of

the youth counterculture and of new religious movements such as the Children of God, the Moonies, and the Hare Krishnas. Their proselytism targeted young adults and college students, leaving their families puzzled and worried when sons and daughters abandoned their secular careers to work full time for a "bizarre" religious movement. The metaphor of "brainwashing" was quickly applied to this apparently unexplainable change in behavior, and a militant opposition first against the Children of God and then against the "big three" (no longer Catholicism, Mormonism, and Freemasonry, but now the Moonies, Krishnas, and Scientologists) spread from California throughout the United States and eventually to many other countries.

The movement against the "cults" was, however, hardly a united front. Students of the organized hostility to the "cults" have recognized the difference between a *secular anti-cult movement* (claiming to discuss only deeds, not creeds) and a *religious counter-cult movement* (where the fight against heretic creeds remains crucial). The different anti-cult and counter-cult movements have occasionally cooperated, but

and secular, "rationalist" and "post-rationalist" — using the example of recent anti-Mormonism and of its different and often conflicting wings [20].

3. The Satanism Scare of the 1980s

In his early studies of hysteria, Sigmund Freud used hypnosis, and for a while became convinced that what he called the "theory of seduction" could explain the genesis of hysteria in female patients. All the patients he hypnotized, in fact, remembered being sexually abused in their childhood, a memory they were not conscious of while not under hypnosis. While Freud was initially persuaded that these memories corresponded to real, historical instances of abuse, he became perplexed when, continuing the hypnotic therapy, almost all the patients "remembered" abuse by Satanists (mostly their parents) in bizarre ceremonies and apparitions of the Devil himself. Freud dismissed these stories as fantasies, abandoned the theory of seduction, and went on

Although *Michelle Remembers* was written from a religious point of view, it was welcomed more by secular mental health professionals than by established Churches. Michelle's story has been interpreted within the context of an ongoing discussion on Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), a disorder where the same patient "dissociates" into different "alters" who speak with different voices, may have very different personalities, and may not remember what the other "alters" think or do. Two Hollywood movies, "The Three Faces of Eve" in 1957 and "Sybil" in 1973, popularized this rather spectacular, if rare, disorder. The therapist who had treated Sybil, Cornelia Wilbur, was also instrumental in promoting the theory that MPD was almost invariably the result of severe childhood trauma, often in the form of sexual abuse. Not only was Freud's theory of seduction revived, but also Freud himself was accused of a cover-up for his refusal to treat seriously his patients' memories of satanic abuse. In the 1970s Dr. Wilbur was associated at the University of Kentucky with Dr. Arnold Ludwig and other therapists who were already active in the anti-cult movement. In 1984 the First

their relations have become increasingly difficult in recent years [17]. Within each movement against the "cults" — the secular and the religious — differences have also arisen. I have argued elsewhere that both segments of the organized hostility to the "cults" are presently divided into a more moderate "rationalist" and a more extreme "post-rationalist" wing. Within the secular anti-cult movement the "rationalist" wing is composed of professional skeptics who regard the leaders of the "cults" as clever frauds, while the "post-rationalist" wing insists on the theory of "brainwashing", regarded as something magical, or even "the modern version of the evil eye" [18]. Within the religious counter-cult movement the "rationalist" wing argues with logical arguments against the anti-Scriptural heresies of the "cults" and cautions against any attempt to connect the "cults" too directly with the activities of the Devil. The idea that the Devil personally directs the "cults" is, on the other hand, the trademark of the "post-rationalist" wing of the counter-cult movement [19]. I have tried to explore elsewhere the different attitudes — religious

to formulate the alternative explanation for hysteria which eventually made him famous [21]. Eighty years after Freud's early career, the theory of seduction surfaced again. A Canadian Catholic therapist, Lawrence Pazder, was told by his patient Michelle Smith that she had been abused by a satanic cult of international proportions twenty years before as a child, had witnessed horrible scenes of human sacrifice and cannibalism, and had seen the Devil but had forgotten these experiences until beginning therapy with Pazder. Unlike Freud, Pazder concluded that Smith's memories corresponded to true, actual historical events. He persuaded the bishop of his Canadian Diocese to accompany him and Michelle to the Vatican, where their dramatic revelations about Satanism were met with more caution than enthusiasm. Pazder, however, decided to publish a book that eventually became a bestseller, *Michelle Remembers*, in 1980 [22]. Shortly thereafter Pazder left his wife and four children to marry Smith, herself a divorcee, and the couple had to terminate their relationship with the Catholic Church (which does not condone divorce).

International Conference on Multiple Personality/Dissociative States was organized in Chicago, where Wilbur delivered the opening plenary address. By 1986 leaders of the Cult Awareness Network, the largest secular anti-cult organization in the U.S., were invited to address the annual Chicago conference, thus forging an effective link between the MPD professionals and the anti-cult activists. The latter simply applied to the satanic cults whose memories surfaced in MPD patients their model of brainwashing and mind control. The result was twofold: as a result of increasing media coverage of MPD, thousands of patients in the United States began claiming that they were "survivors" who had been abused by satanic cults in their childhood; and their therapists and anti-cult activists alike finally repudiated Freud and claimed that the survivors' stories were literally true. They also called for quick action by public authorities to uncover the perpetrators, who were — they claimed — members of a vast, "multi-generational" and deadly dangerous satanic conspiracy. Anti-satanists also speculated that MPD does not always arise as a sponta-

neous protection against traumatic memories but may be "planted" by Satanists, who presumably have access to sophisticated psycho-technologies enabling them to brain-wash children to the point of dissociation, making their memories so garbled that future identification of the perpetrators becomes virtually impossible [23].

Another development took place in the same years. Survivors in treatment for MPD began relating events that took place decades before their memories surfaced again. Influenced by the survivors' stories, some therapists reasoned that the satanic cults were probably still operating, and that many of the child sexual abuse incidents (unfortunately common in the United States and elsewhere) may have included an undetected satanic element. The first and the most famous case involved the McMartin Preschool in the affluent Los Angeles suburb of Manhattan Beach. The McMartin case began in 1983, when the principals and a number of teachers at the respected preschool were accused of operating an underground satanic cult, which ritually abused and tortured children. Mental health professionals involved in the case were later accused of having "planted" the stories in the children (some of whom were only two or three years old) based on their own persuasion that a satanic conspiracy existed. The McMartin trial was the most expensive in United States legal history and ended in 1990 with no convictions [24]. The McMartin case had an enormous media impact, and it surely had something to do with hundreds of subsequent similar accusations of sexual ritual abuses in both day-care centers and in family settings. Although complete statistical data are lacking, it is possible that as many as two thousand cases of satanic ritual abuse of children were investigated in the decade 1983-1992 [25]. The number of convictions obtained during this ten-year period is a matter of dispute; but skeptical sociologists claim that there are less than five, out of thousands of cases investigated, while anti-Satanists circulate a list of thirteen. Figures are disputed because a specific felony of satanic or ritual abuse has been introduced only recently, and only in some states; in other cases where a conviction for sexual abuse has been obtained it is unclear whether the courts have in fact recognized the existence of a "satanic" element [26]. It is, at any rate, important to distinguish between the stories told by survivors who suffer from MPD and the stories told by children. A bitter debate exists between national lobbies who argue, respectively, that children always tell the truth (Believe the Children) and that their memories are

often false (False Memory Syndrome Foundation). However, while not even a single court conviction has been obtained based on the survivors' stories, at least a handful of cases exist in which abusers who appear to have used satanic symbols and paraphernalia have been convicted based on reports by children. There was no evidence that these abusers belonged to international, organized satanic cults, and no reports of human sacrifice have been confirmed. Some therapists do not believe in the stories of the survivors, but they do believe that some of the stories of satanic abuse told by children may be true.

It is also important not to confuse the debate on satanic ritual abuse of children with discussions of adolescent Satanism. There is little doubt that gangs of teenagers exist which perform some sort of a home-made mix of satanic rituals (copied from comics, books or movies) and drug parties. These teenagers are often guilty of minor crimes such as vandalism or animal sacrifice. In less than a dozen cases more serious crimes appear to have been committed, including a handful of murders. In these cases it is difficult to determine whether drugs, gang-related violence, or Satan worship is mostly responsible for the crimes. What is clear is that teenage Satanism is not connected with any international conspiracy, and it is a different phenomenon from both religious Satanism represented by organizations such as the Church of Satan and "ritual" child abuse by adult perpetrators [27].

Attitudes before the widespread allegations of satanic child abuse in the 1980s reflect the differences between anti-cult and counter-cult movements. Some anti-cult movements — whose influence was declining in the mid-1980s — quickly seized the opportunity of adding Satanism to the list of "cults" they were claiming to fight, and became one of the main forces behind the Satanism scare [28]. While "post-rationalist" organizations such as the Cult Awareness Network do accept the claims of survivors at face value, the "rationalist" wing of the anti-cult movement is predictably more skeptical. CSER, the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion, an organization with connections to CSICOP and with the skeptic press Prometheus Books of Buffalo (New York) — both active in exposing "cults" from a secular humanist point of view — reacted very strongly against what it perceived as a superstitious legend. CSER published a report in 1989 in which the Cult Awareness Network was included on a list of "non-experts" on Satanism. The skeptic Committee concluded that the whole idea of a widespread satanic conspiracy was

a huge hoax [29]. Surprisingly, the religious counter-cult movement — although firmly convinced of the existence of the Devil — was quite slow in adding Satanism to its own list of "cults". Evangelical counter-cultists were suspicious of secular psychiatrists who figured too prominently in the promotion of the Satanism scare. Eventually, however, the "post-rationalist" wing of the religious counter-cult movement (already persuaded that the Devil was behind most "cults") accepted the claims of the survivors. Evangelical survivors, prepared to explain their experience in strictly religious terms, began to develop — particularly in Pentecostal and charismatic circles — a technique called "inner healing", where lost memories of childhood abuse are recovered not through secular therapy but through a protracted group prayer on behalf of the disturbed individual [30]. The "rationalist" wing of the evangelical counter-cult movement, on the other hand, flatly refused to jump on the Satanism scare bandwagon. The Christian Research Institute — the organization founded by the late counter-cult activist Walter Martin (1928-1989) — concluded that "there is still no substantial, compelling evidence that satanic ritual abuse stories and conspiracy theories are true (...). Careful investigation of the stories, the alleged victims, and the proponents has given us every reason to reject the satanic conspiracy model" [31]. *Christianity Today*, the most influential voice of American Evangelicalism, recommended "skepticism" in a June 1993 article authored by two Evangelical university professors and noted that while "for nearly a decade, American law enforcement has been aggressively investigating the allegations of victims of ritualistic abuse", so far "there is no evidence for the allegation of large-scale baby breeding [i.e. "producing" babies whose birth is not registered with public authorities for sacrifice in satanic ceremonies], human sacrifice, and organized satanic conspiracies". "We cannot fall victim — the Evangelical professors concluded — to sloppy thinking or judgment based on a mixture of fallacies, non-evidence, and subjectivism. 'He who chases fantasies lacks judgment' (Prov. 12:11)" [32]. In March 1994 the same *Christianity Today* even recommended the ultimate skeptic book on the Satanism scare, *Satanic Panic* by (secular) sociologist Jeffrey S. Victor. The reviewer confirmed, once again, that "to date there has been no investigation that has substantiated the claims of alleged satanic abuse survivors" and quoted John F. Kennedy to the effect that "the great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie — deliberate, contrived, and dishonest — but the myth —



persistent, pervasive, and unrealistic" [33].

The most visible conflict was not, however, between "rationalist" and "post-rationalist" groups against the "cults". Sociologists and other academics specializing in New Religious Movements were united in their militant opposition to the theory of the satanic conspiracy and did much to ridicule the stories of survivors. The publication of the collective work *The Satanism Scare* in 1991 by noted sociologists and anthropologists was a crucial blow to the survivors' credibility [34]. By 1991 even some psychiatric specialists of MPD were harboring doubts on the factual truth of the survivors' stories, and the difficult decision to allow skeptic anthropologists and psychiatrists to propose alternative points of view in the yearly Chicago conferences on MPD was made, much to the disappointment of militant survivors' organizations such as Voices in Action and others [35]. In 1994-1995 two official reports sponsored by the U.K. [36] and the U.S. [37] governments concluded that no large satanic conspiracy existed and the large majority of survivors'

stories were not factually true, although in a few cases abusers may have tried to terrorize children by referring to the Devil or Satanism. These abusers, however, were not connected to international networks of Satanists, secret or otherwise. It may be expected that the reports will cause a decline — and, eventually, a marginalization — of the Satanism scares of the 1980, largely based on survivors' stories.

II. Vampirology and the Satanism Scares

1. Pre-Classic Vampirology, 1706-1787

Modern scholarship has made abundantly clear that the vampire scares in Eastern Europe (circa 1672-1772) occurred independently from any Western European Satanism scare, based on local folklore and

legends. The reception of the Eastern incidents in the West is, however, another matter. Historian Michel de Certeau has noted that Satanism scares are different from earlier witchcraft scares and are a typical modern phenomenon. The widespread social alarm following the French incidents at the Court of Louis XIV (and early possession cases in the 17th century) could hardly be explained without taking into account the growing importance of the press, particularly in the form of dozens of pamphlets, but including early weekly and monthly journals and gazettes [38]. The press kept alive for decades incidents that, in earlier times, would have been forgotten in a few years. It is in the climate created by the countless printed accounts of the first proto-satanic cult operated by Madame La Voisin at the Court of Louis XIV that the most quoted book on vampires in the 18th century reached Western Europe. *Magia Posthuma*, by Charles Ferdinand de Schertz, published in 1706, related a number of vampire stories from Bohemia and Moravia and, though discounting exaggerations, considered them

mostly believable. As a lawyer, Schertz advised against desecrating bodies without a previous regular process before a court of law, involving expert advice by doctors and theologians. Burning bodies of suspected vampires should not be left to ignorant peasants, but should be carried out by legitimate authorities pursuant to a due decision by a court of law [39]. That Schertz was taken seriously in countries like Italy, Germany and France — and was still quoted as an authoritative source well into the 19th century — could only have happened within the general frame of the Satanism scare created by the La Voisin investigation and its widespread publicity through the press. Evidence that Schertz's reports were widely believed, including by scholars, is also offered by refutations produced by skeptics. Perhaps the most famous of the refutations of Schertz is included in the forty-sixth volume of the huge *Universal-Lexicon* published between 1732-1754 in Leipzig by Johann Heinrich Zedler. Zedler quotes the incidents mentioned by Schertz and other famous stories — including Peter Plogojovitz's — and concludes that vampire scares are due to epidemics of psychiatric illnesses and are mere dreams by peasant populations. The quality of the soil in certain regions of Eastern Europe explains why some buried bodies are found apparently "intact" after months or years. There is, at any rate, nothing mysterious about vampires, and psychiatrists could easily dispose of the related stories. "When we could find a natural explanation for an incident — Zedler concludes — we should stay with this explanation without resorting to spirits or occult qualities" [40]. Anti-Schertz skeptics also existed within the Roman Catholic Church. In Italy monsignor Giuseppe Davanzati (1665-1755) archbishop of Trani, wrote in 1743 his *Dissertazione sopra i vampiri*, denying that vampires existed at all and contradicting the opinion of cardinal Schtattembach, the bishop of Olmutz who in a conversation with the Italian archbishop had typically used Schertz's arguments. Davanzati's refutation circulated widely in a manuscript form, but apparently was not published before 1774 [41]. Most importantly, in 1743 Davanzati's work had been approved in a widely publicized letter by Pope Benedict XIV, who is regarded to this day as an authority in matters of miracles and prodigies, both divine and diabolical, in the Catholic Church. Benedict XIV later returned to the vampire question, branding as superstitious the Eastern European bishops who believed in the reality of the phenomena. He even suggested, in a letter to the Polish archbishop of Leopolis, that "possibly there are priests who support belief in

vampires in order to obtain from gullible peasants the payment of exorcisms and Masses" [42].

It is commonly argued that belief in the reality of vampires in the 18th century was supported by the famous Dissertation by Benedictine scholar Dom Augustin Calmet (1672-1757). Most of those criticizing Calmet — including some of his contemporaries — probably did not read carefully his book and trusted the ironic remarks of Voltaire, who — on the other hand — had been the guest of Calmet in his abbey of Senones and held the Benedictine in some regard for his prodigious erudition in historical and theological matters. It is true that Calmet, in his 1746 book, amassed in an apparently uncritical way reports of vampire incidents from all over Eastern Europe and became the source of all modern vampirology. On the other hand, recent scholarship tends to regard Calmet, based on his correspondence with a number of fellow Catholic scholars and priests, as much more skeptical than is usually believed. Since a number of passages in his 1746 book were ambiguous, they were corrected in the second edition, of 1751, where Calmet concludes that he does believe that some corpses may be "conserved" (perhaps because they were buried when the subject was only apparently dead) but he does not believe in vampirism in the usual sense of the term. As we shall see, in the 19th century Calmet will be accused by Catholic demonologists of being a skeptical Enlightenment philosopher in disguise. Italian scholar Nadia Minerva — in a study of the Satanism scares in the 18th century — has concluded that Calmet was neither a skeptic in disguise (if he did not believe in vampires, he did believe firmly in a number of other diabolical manifestations), nor the gullible true believer depicted by Voltaire. He tried a "middle way" that he called the "voie raisonnable" ("reasonable way"), arguing that some phenomena were perhaps true but most were not. His peculiar literary style of repeating first all the vampire stories as if they were actually true, then criticizing them in later chapters of the book, maintained however an ambiguity in the whole exercise. Sociologically, Calmet — whatever his ultimate personal opinions — thus played the role of a believer and helped many demonologists, particularly in the subsequent century, to argue that vampires did indeed exist [43]. In the 18th century itself vampire scares were halted by Empress Maria Theresa of Austria in 1753 following an investigation by his Court doctor, Gerhard van Swieten (1700-1772). The investigation — which regarded belief in vampirism as mere superstition — was written in French

and German in 1755 and published in his final version in Augsburg in 1768 [44]. Van Swieten was an Enlightenment skeptic [45], but his work was well received by the Vatican and eventually translated into Italian in 1787 with a title explicitly referring to Schertz's *Magia Posthuma* [46]. This Vatican-approved edition of van Swieten's skeptical report marks the end of pre-classic vampirology, originating with Schertz's book in 1706. In a parallel development, the Satanism scare generated by the first satanic incidents of late 17th century was losing momentum between 1750-1790. As we mentioned earlier, it was revived by Catholic authors who suspected a Satanist conspiracy behind the French Revolution.

2. Classic Vampirology, 1819-

1897

As we mentioned earlier, Catholic demonology in the 19th century tried to explain through the action of Satanists — and, ultimately, of the Devil himself — two apparently inexplicable historical events which had taken Catholics by surprise: the French Revolution, and the rise of Spiritualism. Most treatises on demonology in France — the most prolific country in this field — start in the 19th century with a discussion of the theories of German theologian Johann Joseph von Görres (1776-1848). Görres, a Protestant professor at Munich University, had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1819. His interest in vampires was introduced into the Roman Catholic Church through his conversion, and we can date classic vampirology from this 1819 event. Ironically — while some modern authors regard Görres as gullible and too ready to conclude that demonic influences are at work [47] — in France throughout the 19th century Görres was widely criticized for being too skeptical. In fact, in his seminal work *Die Christliche Mystik* [48], Görres distinguishes between three types of mysticism: divine, natural, and satanic. For his time, the German theologian is not too generous in classifying phenomena into either the divine or satanic categories: most are explained as "natural", by resort — if necessary — to dubious theories such as animal magnetism or mesmerism. The famous section on vampires in Görres' magnum opus is a good example of his theories. Vampirism is indeed discussed within the context of "natural mysticism", i.e. extraordinary phenomena which are neither divine nor satanic in origin. Görres starts with a discussion of the most famous cases and vampirism scares in Eastern

Europe, including the case of Peter Plogojowitz. Not surprisingly, he discusses at length Schertz's *Magia Posthuma* and reports some of the most curious stories from Calmet. Görres' explanation of these incidents is entirely natural, but — as elsewhere in his work — he often makes use of contemporary pseudoscience. In the bodies of the so-called vampires the soul has been separated by the body, and there is no real "human life" left. There could be, however, still a "vital principle", a "vegetal life" still present in the blood that prevented the corruption of the body. This "vegetal life" is enough to explain why bodies of the alleged vampires are found full of blood, and Görres offers comparisons with illnesses where abnormal quantities of blood are expelled from the body. A corpse maintaining a "vegetal life" is, according to Görres, a rare thing; unfortunately, it is also dangerous. The presence of such corpses, even deeply buried, causes an "influx on the living humans" in a comparatively large area around the cemetery. Those under the "influx" of these bodies slowly "lose life", develop an illness "without fever" and die. This illness is also accompanied by "hallucinations" where a victim "believes" to be attacked and to have his or her blood sucked; hence the vampire stories. When the victims of the "vampire" — in fact a corpse maintaining a "vegetal life" — die, their body easily in turn maintains the "vegetal life" and becomes another "vampire". The only remedy is to burn these corpses and "the common people, with its common sense, has developed a better view of this problem than scholars with their skeptical mind" [49]. Görres, thus, does not deny that people could actually die because of the "vampires", but prefers a natural explanation — although based on the dubious theory of "vegetal life" — without involving the Devil.

The French demonology of the 1850s and 1860s — confronted, mostly, with Spiritualism — discussed at length Görres' theories but normally criticized the German theologian for not giving the Devil his due. The two most important demonologists of these decades are marquis Jules Eudes de Mirville (1802-1873) and one-time ambassador Henri-Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux (1805-1876), mostly remembered today for his anti-Jewish tirades but well-known also as a demonologist in his time. Their theories were summarized by Joseph Bizouard, whom we have already mentioned. In the United States, Orestes Brownson frankly recognized his debt to Mirville in matters diabolical. Mirville discusses vampires in the fourth volume of the definitive edition of his *Pneumatologie*. Mirville's discussion is a

summary of the well-known Eastern European incidents and a criticism of doctor Calmeil, a psychiatrist who had regarded vampire stories as mere hallucinations. Mirville remarks that it would not be a great comfort for victims of vampirism to hear that, according to the learned psychiatrist, they have been killed by mere "hallucinations". His discussion of vampirism is, however, somewhat inconclusive. Mirville does not accept "natural" theories but remains uncertain whether vampire bodies are possessed by the souls of the damned (perhaps the same souls once attached to that body, according to Eastern European popular belief) or by the Devil himself [50]. Gougenot des Mousseaux resolves the problem in 1864 without hesitation. As usual, he takes most of his fact from Schertz, and, like his friend Mirville, criticizes the medical theory of hallucination of doctor Calmeil. He ruthlessly attacks Calmet as a skeptic disguised as a believer. He also criticizes the theory of a French spiritist, M. Piérart, who thinks that vampires are simply poor people buried when still living, in a "cataleptic state", projecting their astral bodies to take the blood they need in order to survive. Gougenot dismisses Piérart's theory as based on the unproved existence of the astral body. Quoting Kabalistic authors he was familiar with as an anti-Jewish polemist, Gougenot gives his solution. The Catholic Church accepts as a well-established fact that the body of a living human being could be possessed by the Devil. There is no reason to doubt that the Devil could also possess the body of a dead person and "animate a corpse". A corpse possessed by a Demon becomes easily "homicidal" as the Devil has a "homicidal and revolutionary nature". "Blood, blood! This is their better cry; all Devils are vampiric, and why? Because they are the Homicide Spirits of the abyss" [51].

After these scholarly precedents, it is surprising that the Taxil hoax does not devote to vampirism more than a few pages. Taxil and his co-conspirator doctor Hacks (alias doctor Bataille) were not particularly concerned with Eastern European tales, but rather with living human beings killing people and drinking blood under the influence of Satan. In the second volume of *Le Diable au XIXe siècle* we meet one such vampire, a "Hindo-African of the Mauritius Islands", allegedly executed on December 12, 1892 for having "vampirized" a young girl, sucking her blood from her neck and killing her in the process. For Bataille this individual, called Dianh, was obviously "in frequent relations with Lucifer". Other examples are given and the message is that vampires, rather than corpses animated by

the Devil, are criminal human beings who drink blood and kill people because they are part of a huge Satanist conspiracy [52]. Bataille, here, takes into account a new medical literature describing "clinical vampirism" as a compulsion to drink blood leading to the attacking and eventually killing of human beings. 1892, the year when the publication of *Le Diable* was started, was also the year of the English translation of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, first published in German by psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840 — 1902), which contains a number of stories of clinical vampirism [53]. It is a well-known fact that Krafft-Ebing's work inspired the character of Renfield in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, first published in 1897. The Count himself, on the other hand, is still — in Stoker's novel — a rather "Catholic" vampire, duly impressed by Catholic prayers and consecrated hosts. The publication of *Dracula* in 1897 marks at the same time the triumph and the demise of classic vampirology. Clinical vampirism, as studied by psychiatrists and reduced to a purely secular and medicalized phenomenon, will surface again in the Satanism scares of our century.

3. Modern Vampirology, 1897-

1890: The Secularization of the Vampire

The history of clinical vampirism has been documented in 1992 by Richard Noll. Clinical vampirism has been described repeatedly by a number of 20th century psychiatrists, and Noll proposes to rename it "Renfield's syndrome in honor of the character in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*". The progression of "Renfield's syndrome" is outlined by Noll as follows:

1. A pivotal event often leads to the development of vampirism (blood drinking). This usually occurs in childhood, and the experience of bleeding or the taste of blood is found to be 'exciting'. After puberty, this excitement associated with blood is experienced as sexual arousal.

2. The progression of Renfield's syndrome follows a typical course in many cases:

Autovampirism is generally developed first, usually in childhood, by initially self-inducing scrapes or cuts in the skin to produce blood, which is then ingested, to later learning how to open major blood vessels (veins, arteries) in order to drink a steady stream of warm blood more directly. The blood may then be ingested at the time of

the opening, or may be saved in jars or other containers for later imbibing or for other reasons. Masturbation often accompanies autovampiristic practices.

Zoophagia (literally the eating of living creatures, but more specifically the drinking of their blood) may develop prior to auto-vampirism in some cases, but usually is next to develop. Persons with Renfield's syndrome may themselves catch and eat or drink the blood of living creatures such as insects, cats, dogs, or birds. The blood of other species may be obtained at places such as slaughterhouses and then ingested. Sexual activity may or may not accompany these functions.

Vampirism in its true form is the next stage to develop — procuring and drinking the blood of living human beings. This may be done by stealing blood from hospitals, laboratories, and so forth, or by attempting to drink the blood directly from others. Usually this involves some sort of consensual sexual activity, but in lust-murder type cases and in other nonlethal violent crimes, the sexual activity and vampirism may not be consensual.

3. The compulsion to drink blood almost always has a strong sexual component associated with it.

4. Blood will sometimes take on an almost mystical significance as a sexualized symbol of life or power, and, as such, an experience of well being or empowerment will be reported by those with Renfield's syndrome following such activities.

5. Persons with Renfield's syndrome are primarily male.

6. The defining characteristic of Renfield's syndrome is the blood-drinking compulsion. Other related activities such as necrophilia and necrophagia that do not have as their goal the drinking of blood are not to be considered aspects of this disorder". [54]

Noll chronicles the history of a different kind of vampirology, no longer the province of the exorcist or the demonologist but of the psychiatrist. Modern vampirology starts after the publication of *Dracula* in 1897 and covers almost a century. From 1897 to 1980 psychiatric descriptions of clinical vampires are not scarce (although the disease is by no means widespread), while Catholic and Protestant treatises on the Devil almost always ignore vampires, and no hint of a ritualistic or religious vampirism surfaces. Interestingly enough, Noll is among the skeptics about the recent Satanism scare and survivors' stories. Although sympathetic towards religious people involved in exorcism, often unfairly harassed by secular psychiatrists [55], Noll does not believe in

the existence of the Devil — nor, for that matter, in the supernatural origins of Christianity [56]. Ironically, however, Noll's collection of medical evidence for clinical vampirism has been quoted by both secular anti-Satanists and evangelical counter-Satanists in the recent scare.

4. Post-Modern Vampirology,

1980-1995

After the publication of *Michelle Remembers* in 1980, the interest in ritualistic abuse has caused, as we have mentioned, the largest Satanism scare in our century. Within the framework of this scare we have witnessed a renewed interest in vampires, and a new vampirology has emerged. Although the interest is still concentrated on living human vampires rather than on the undead, vampirism is again examined within the context of a ritual and of black magic. Small vampire-based new religious movements do exist, such as the Temple of the Vampire (with "i") based in Lacey, Washington and the Order of the Vampyre (with "y") within one of the largest contemporary Satanist groups, Michael Aquino's Temple of Set. Some of these organizations only practice a metaphorical vampirism, while in others members ritually suck blood from each other (normally not from the neck — the exercise could be practiced in a non-dangerous way but is painful — but also, less romantically, from a finger pierced by a surgical needle). Survivors have however told therapists much wilder stories. A number of survivors have reported having been attacked during satanic ceremonies by Satanists drinking blood from their necks [57]. If one believes — as I have argued elsewhere [58] — that survivors' stories are socially constructed narratives influenced by prevailing cultural trends, it could be easily argued that blood-drinking incidents have recently surfaced in survivors' accounts due to the renewed popularity of vampires in the American movie industry. It could not be excluded that recent scholarly studies of vampires [59] may have in turn influenced some therapists. It is, at any rate, clear that in such secular anti-satanic literature vampires are not corpses animated by the Devil or immortal beings. They are common human beings — or perhaps uncommon, in the sense of being criminal Satanists. In 1991 *Cosmopolitan* reporter Carol Page published a successful collection of interviews with such individuals, "real vampires", where she even proclaimed that we are living today in the "age of vam-

pirism" [60]. This is, in part, still a secularized vampirism, the province of the psychiatrist rather than the exorcist. The ritualistic context, on the other hand, introduces a new, post-modern element with respect to the modern, medical phase of vampirology. Noll's study, additionally, is also quoted by Evangelical counter-Satanists who would happily add that these disturbed individuals are clearly inspired by the Devil himself.

Perhaps the most extraordinary work of this literature is *Lucifer Dethroned*, published in 1993 by counter-cult activist William Schnoebelen along with his wife Sharon [61]. Schnoebelen is himself an interesting character. After a short passage in the Mormon Church — where he made a living as a convert claiming (falsely, as it turned out) to be a former Roman Catholic priest (he had been, in fact, a priest in a small splinter group not associated with the Church of Rome) — Schnoebelen converted to Evangelical Christianity and started a career in professional counter-cultism claiming to be almost an ex-everything: ex-Catholic priest, ex-Mormon, but also ex-witch, ex-Satanist, ex-Freemason, in increasingly lurid accounts. Most of his books have been published by the notorious Chick Publications of Chino (California), well known for its extreme anti-Catholicism [62]. Schnoebelen, thus, has emerged as an interesting figure and moral entrepreneur in modern professional counter-cultism [63]. Not surprisingly, after Hollywood renewed interest in vampires and the success of Anne Rice's novels, Schnoebelen has claimed to be also an ex-vampire. The back cover of his *Lucifer Dethroned* proclaims a moral tale: "If Schnoebelen, crazed by blood lust and headed for murder, could be changed by Jesus Christ, ANYONE can!" (emphasis in original). Schnoebelen relates how, having descended into all the degrees of occultism and Satanism, he discovered the "final piece of the puzzle". The ultimate occultism is "VAMPIRISM!" (emphasis in original). Schnoebelen — who has really been for a while a bishop in the Chicago-based occultist Michael Bertiaux's Gnostic Church — claims that "the inner rings" of his organization (not named in the book) "were involved with Thelema, the religion of Aleister Crowley. Among these innermost rings were certain select women who were consecrated, dedicated, willing — even delighted to let me drink their blood. With enough women to choose from, no one woman would lose enough blood to become seriously threatened. They enjoyed the experience, and I was sustained. Thus, I did not have to go outside our rings to prey upon women for their blood — at first...". Schnoebelen blames Hollywood for having

sold to him, with the "Dracula" movies, "the lie of eternal youth and eternal beauty (...). I know, because I bought that lie — hook, line and fang". "The vampire cult", according to Schnoebelen, is "the last and most damnable step in [the] exploration of Satanism". Catholicism, as usual in Schnoebelen's books, is also to be blamed, for his Eucharistic ritual of drinking the blood of Jesus may be propedeutic for Satanists to drinking human blood. Schnoebelen describes a "Mass of St. Vlad", supposedly celebrated in his cult in honor of Dracula. "Special sacramental rum was used instead of the traditional red wine. It was essentially similar to the Orthodox liturgy, except for obvious differences". One of the "priestesses" was involved. "First, I would drink from her neck until she nearly fainted from loss of blood. Then, I would open up my own chest and [the priestess] would drink deeply from my blood. This supposedly transmitted the foreign, demonic 'enzyme' into her body which began transforming her into a priestess of the Nosferatu. The mass would then conclude with setting the sacramental liquor (supposedly transubstantiated into the blood of Dracula himself) aflame. We would call upon Vlad to come and smile upon the creation of this new 'child' of his." One day Schnoebelen "almost went too far with one of the priestesses. Remarkably, she was enjoying it no end, but I lost control and drunk so much of her blood that she became unconscious". Happily, the priestess did not die but we see Schnoebelen wandering at midnight in Milwaukee watching "the occasional prostitute" and trying desperately to control his "animal urge to wait until she was alone and pull her down the way a lion would attack a gazelle". The good Christian reader is thus led to climax of the story, followed by an immediate anticlimax: "It was at this desperate time that the Lord Jesus Christ entered my life (...) Jesus can save to the uttermost even someone as horrendous and wretched as I had become!" [64]. It is, of course, not impossible that Schnoebelen may have met some "clinical vampires" — or someone claiming to be a "clinical vampire" — in the occult subculture. Schnoebelen, however, has invented so many incidents that could not conceivably have happened [65] that one is not inclined to believe his vampire stories. The Dracula mass as initiation on how to become a good vampire is too similar to Anne Rice's Lestat stories about vampire initiation. Schnoebelen, however, is still very much in demand as a speaker in the Evangelical-Fundamentalist counter-cult circuit, and his book offers to counter-Satanists the possibility of integrating vam-



pires into their view of a Satanist conspiracy.

The Dracula mass may never have been celebrated in Milwaukee (although, as we mentioned earlier, simpler vampire rituals do exist in the contemporary occult subculture), but these incidents confirm that vampires do indeed reemerge in any Satanism scare. Since Satanism scares are never very long, but periodically resurface in history, the stories told by survivors to psychiatrists and by Schnobelen to his Evangelical Christian readers may not be the final chapter on tales about "real" vampires. Denis Buican in a controversial book which includes references to possible political analogies, claims that Dracula has become a archetype, where, "in the same will to preserve a malignant power and a threatened life, those who lose their blood and those who drink it are somewhat confused" [66]. The vampire is, at the same time, an image of evil and an image of how unsure we moderns have become about the origin of evil.

As usual, post-modernity is not a mere return to pre-modern models. In this perspective — and contrary to many reviews of the movie version of "Interview with the Vampire" as superficial (and perhaps not politically correct) — Anne Rice's saga is highly significant. Lestat's quest is above all about the origins of the vampire and, at the same time, about the origins of the universe, of evil, of God. In her fourth novel of the vampire cycle, *The Tale of the Body Thief*, a friend of Lestat, the occult scholar David Talbot (later to become a vampire himself), relates a vision he had in a Paris café of God and the Devil arguing with each other. David's theory is that God is not pure spirit, "has a body" and "has made many mistakes". "The Devil became the Devil because he tried to warn God". According to Talbot, there may be more than one Devil. Each Devil may change his mind or grow tired of the job, and be eventually substituted [67]. Anne Rice has argued that Talbot's theory is "very much on my mind, the idea that the Devil learns and changes. How do they get him to keep the job? That's what this book is all about. It's about Lestat learning and changing, and not really wanting to be the Devil" [68]. Still, it is a demon, Amel, who in Rice's saga creates the first vampire Akasha, around 4,000 B.C. in Egypt. Akasha then plays a significant role in Lestat's story [69]. Vampires and the Devil, thus, are connected, although vampires are also curious about the Devil and unhappy that they do not know enough about him and the universe. This could not be the end of the story, at least in Rice's terms, as we see in her further vampire

novel, *Memnoch the Devil*, where Lestat finally meets the Devil himself and confronts the whole Christian worldview [70]. A similar post-modern vampire is Saint-Germain, created by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro: like Lestat (and unlike Stoker's Dracula) he is not stopped by the symbols of Christianity, while on the other hand he is knowledgeable in the occult sciences and carries the name of a famous 18th century occultist. It is, on the other hand, unlikely that Anne Rice, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro — or anyone else — will have the final word on the relationship between God, the Devil, Satanism, and vampires. Perhaps the World Dracula Congress of 1995 will be remembered as the end of a phase of vampirology and the beginning of further developments. At any rate, as archetypes now deeply encoded in the human soul vampires are so powerful that, like the poor of the Gospel, they will likely remain with us until the end of the world.

Notes

1. Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1993), pp.1-2.
2. See François Ravaissin-Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille: Documents inédits*, 19 vols. (Paris: A. Durand et Pedone-Lauriel, 1866 — 1904). See vol. 6 (1873) and vol. 7 (1874).
3. The most influential works include: Jean-Baptiste Fiard, *La France trompée par les magiciens et démonolâtres du XVIIIe siècle, fait démontré par les faits* (Paris: Grégoire, 1803); [Jules] Eudes de Mirville, *Pneumatologie*, 10 vols., (Paris: Vrayet de Surcy, Delaroque et Wattelier, 1853-1868); Henri-Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Mœurs et pratiques des Démons ou des esprits visiteurs du spiritisme ancien et moderne* (Paris: Plon, 1865); and Joseph Bizouard, *Des Rapports de l'homme avec le Démon: Essai historique et philosophique*, 6 vols. (Paris: Gaume Frères et J. Duprey, 1864).
4. See Orestes Brownson, *The Spirit-Rapper: An Autobiography* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company and London: Charles Dolman, 1854), pp.164-167; Brownson's book was translated into French as *L'Esprit frappeur: Scènes du Monde Invisible* (Paris and Tournai: H.Casterman, 1862) — see p.103 for the reference to the Book of Mormon).
5. Bizouard, *Des Rapports de l'homme avec le Démon*, vol. VI, pp.111-127.
6. Joris-Karl Huysmans, *La-bas* (Paris: Tresse et Stock, 1891). See also Jules Bois, *Le Satanisme et la magie* (Paris: Léon Chailley, 1895).
7. See Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870-1914* (London: Constable, 1966), pp.124-125.
8. Dr. Bataille, *Le Diable au XIXe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris and Lyon: Delhomme et Briguët, 1892-1894).
9. See Bataille, *Le Diable*, vol. 1.

10. See A.E. Waite, *Devil Worship in France or the Question of Lucifer* (London: George Redway, 1896). In 1897-1898 Waite wrote an interesting sequel to this book, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism: A Sequel to "Devil Worship in France"*, which has remained unpublished and is at present in a private collection in England.

11. Taxil's confession was published in the anti-Catholic magazine *Le Frondeur* (April 25, 1897). A good treatment of the Taxil incident is Eugen Weber (ed.), *Satan Franc-maçon. La mystification de Léon Taxil* (Paris: Julliard, 1964). After Weber's book a number of new documents have surfaced and are discussed in my *Il ritorno del Diavolo: Satanisti e antisatanisti dal Seicento ai nostri giorni* (Milan: Mondadori, 1994).

12. See Clotilde Bersone, *L'Élu du Dragon* (Paris: L'Étincelle, 1929). The book is kept in print to this day by anti-Masonic groups in various languages.

13. See Marc Pluquet, *La Sophiale, Maria de Naglowska: sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris: self-published, n.d.); Alexandrian, *Les Libérateurs de l'amour* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), pp.185-206.

14. For Crowley's non-belief in the existence of the Devil (or of God), see Aleister Crowley, *Magick*, edited by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant, (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1973), p. 296. For a discussion see my *Il cappello del mago: I nuovi movimenti magici dallo spiritismo al satanismo* (Milan: SugarCo, 1990), pp. 268-279.

15. See David G. Bromley and Susan G. Ainsley, "Satanism and Satanic Churches: The Contemporary Incarnations", in Timothy Miller (ed.), *America's Alternative Religions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

16. See Robert N. Bellah and Frederick E. Greenspahn (eds.), *Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostility in America* (New York: Crossroad, 1987); David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature", *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47 (1960), pp. 205-224.

17. See my "Strange Bedfellows or Future Enemies?", *Update & Dialog* 3 (October 1993), pp. 13-22.

18. See Barbara Hargrove, "Social Sources and Consequences of the Brainwashing Controversy", in David G. Bromley and James T. Richardson (eds.), *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1983), pp. 299-308 (p. 303).

19. For more details, see my "Strange Bedfellows".

20. See my "The Devil Makers: Contemporary Evangelical Fundamentalist Anti-Mormonism", *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27:1 (Spring 1994), pp. 153-169.

21. See Sigmund Freud, with Josef Breuer, "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena", in

Collected Papers, vol.1 (London: International Psychoanalytic Press, 1924).

22. Michelle Smith and Lawrence Pazder, *Michelle Remembers* (New York: Congdon & Lattés, 1980).

23. For these developments see Sherril Mulhern, "The Demonization of Psychopathology", in Jean-Baptiste Martin and Massimo Introvigne (eds.), *Le Défi magique. II. Satanisme, sorcellerie* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994), pp. 53-73.

24. For a story of the trial from a skeptical point of view, see Paul and Shirley Eberle, *The Abuse of Innocence: The McMartin Preschool Trial* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1993).

25. See Victor, *Satanic Panic*, p.109.

26. For the anti-Satanists' list, widely circulated (including in Utah) by Cavalcade Productions, a producer of anti-Satanist videos based in Ukiah, California, see Craig

Lockwood, *Other Altars: Roots of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder* (Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers, 1993), pp. 269-271.

27. The most balanced treatment of adolescent Satanism has been written by a Presbyterian pastor who is also a clinical social worker specializing in assisting teenagers with problems: Joyce Mercer, *Behind the Mask of Adolescent Satanism* (Minneapolis: Deaconess Press, 1991).

28. See Victor, *Satanic Panic*; David G. Bromley, "The Social Construction of Subversion: A Comparison of Anti-Religious and Anti-Satanic Cult Narratives", in Anson D. Shupe and David G. Bromley (eds.), *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York and London: Garland, 1994), pp. 49-75.

29. CSER, *Satanism in America* (Buffalo: CSER, 1989).

30. See John and Mark Sandford, *A Comprehensive Guide to Deliverance and Inner Healing* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1991). Whether or not inner healing is an acceptable form of prayer has been the subject of considerable debate in Catholic charismatic circles. See "Two Views of Inner Healing", *New Covenant* 23:7 (February 1994), pp. 7-10.

31. Bob and Gretchen Passantino, "The Hard Facts about Satanic Ritual Abuse", *Christian Research Journal* 14:3 (Winter 1992), pp. 20-23, 32-34.

32. Robin Perrin and Less Parrott III, "Memories of Satanic Ritual Abuse: The Truth Behind the Panic", *Christianity Today* (June 21, 1993), pp. 19-23.

33. Susan Bergman, "Rumors from Hell", *Christianity Today* (March 7, 1994), pp. 36-37.

34. James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991).

35. See Lockwood, *Other Altars*, pp.13-15.

36. J.S. LaFontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organized and Ritual Abuse* (London: Her Majesty Stationery's Office, 1994).

37. See *New York Times* (October 31, 1994); *Religion Watch* 10 (November 1994), p. 7.

38. See Michel de Certeau, *La Possession de Loudun*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard-Julliard, 1990).

39. Ferdinand de Schertz, *Magia Posthuma* (Olmütz, 1706). See Roland Villeneuve, "Presentation", in Dom Augustin Calmet, *Dissertation sur les revenants en corps, les excommuniés, les oupires ou vampires, brucolaques, etc.*, edited by Roland Villeneuve (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1986), p. 22; and the entry "Czech Republic and Slovakia, Vampires in", in J. Gordon Melton, *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1994), p. 147.

40. Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständige Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, reprint of the Halle-Leipzig edition of 1732-1750, (Graz: Akademische Brück- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1962), vol. 46, pp. 474-482.

41. Giuseppe Davanzati, *Dissertazione sopra i vampiri* (Naples: Raimondi, 1774). Piero Violante, "I Vampiri di Maria Teresa", in Gerhard van Swieten, *Vampyrismus*, edited by Piero Violante (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1988), p. 37, agrees that the *Dissertazione* "was not published before 1774", and this is indeed the first edition in Rome's National Library. I have not found a 1744 edition mentioned by J. Gordon Melton, entry "Davanzati, Giuseppe (1665-1755)", in *The Vampire Book*, pp. 159-160.

42. See Villeneuve, "Présentation", p. 24.

43. See Nadia Minerva, *Il Diavolo: eclissi e metaformosi nel secolo dei Lumi*. Da Asmodeo a Belzebù (Ravenna: Longo 1990), pp. 113-151.

44. Gerhard van Swieten, *Vampyrismus* (Augsburg, 1768).

45. See F.T. Brachka, *Gerhard van Swieten and His World 1700-1772* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970).

46. Gerardo van Swieten, *Considerazioni intorno alla pretesa Magia Posthuma per servire alla storia de' vampiri* (Napoli: Giuseppe Maria Porcelli, 1787). The book was published with the authorization of the local Church authorities.

47. See, for a particularly harsh criticism, the feminist Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Sammlung Historica* (Stuttgart: Eichborn, 1989).

48. Johann Joseph von Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, 5 vol. (Munich-Ratisbon: G.J. Manz, 1836-1842). The widely quoted French translation was published as *La Mystique divine, naturelle et diabolique* (Paris: Poussielgue-Rusand, 1854-1855).

49. Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, book V, chapter 14 (vol. 3, pp. 250-254).

50. Jules Eudes de Mirville, *Pneumatologie*, 2nd ed., vol. 4, pp. 388-392.

51. Henri-Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Les hauts Phénomènes de la magie, précédés du spiritisme antique* (Paris: Plon, 1864), pp. 191-205.

52. Bataille, *Le Diable*, vol. 2, pp. 56-58.

53. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Philadelphia and London: F.A. Davis Co., 1892).

54. Richard Noll, "Vampirism — Introduction", in Richard Noll (ed.), *Vampires, Werewolves, and Demons: Twentieth Century Reports in the Psychiatric Literature* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1992), pp. 18-19.

55. See Richard Noll, "Exorcism and Possession:

The Clash of Worldviews and the Hubris of Psychiatry", *Dissociation: Progress in the Dissociative Disorders*

(The Official Journal of the International Society for the Study of Dissociation), 6:4 (December 1993), pp. 250-253.

56. See also Richard Noll, *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

57. See Victor, *Satanic Panic*, for a number of such stories.

58. See my *Indagine sul Satanismo*.

59. See, for example, Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

60. Carol Page, *Bloodlust: Conversations with Real Vampires* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991).

61. William and Sharon Schnoebelen, *Lucifer Dethroned* (Chino: Chick Publications, 1993).

62. See William J. Schnoebelen and James R. Spencer, *Mormonism's Temple of Doom* (Idaho Falls: Triple J. Publishers, 1987); W. Schnoebelen, *Wicca: Satan's Little White Lie* (Chino: Chick Publications, 1990); W. Schnoebelen, *Masonry Beyond The Light* (Chino: Chick Publications, 1991); W. Schnoebelen, *Roman Catholicism: A Biblical Critique* (Issaquah, Washington): Saints Alive in Jesus, 1990).

63. See on Schnoebelen my "Quand le Diable se fait Mormon. Le Mormonisme comme complot diabolique: l'affaire Schnoebelen", *Politica Hermetica* 6 (1992), pp. 36-54; and "The Devil Makers".

64. Schnoebelen and Schnoebelen, *Lucifer Dethroned*, pp. 259-272.

65. See my "Quand le Diable se fait Mormon" and "The Devil Makers".

66. Denis Buican, *Les Métamorphoses de Dracula: L'histoire et la légende* (Paris: Éditions du Felin, 1993), p. 9. For the larger context see Antoine Faivre (ed.), *Colloque de Cerisy: Les Vampires* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993).

67. Anne Rice, *The Tale of the Body Thief* (New York: Knopf, 1992), pp. 70-72.

68. Anne Rice, *Memnoch the Devil* (New York: Knopf, 1995). See also Katherine Ramsland, *The Vampire Companion: The Official Guide to Anne Rice's "The Vampire Chronicles"* (New York: Ballantine, 1993), p. 97.

69. See Anne Rice, *The Queen of the Damned: The Third Book in the Vampire Chronicles* (New York, Knopf, 1988).

70. See Katherine Ramsland, *Prism of the Night: A Biography of Anne Rice*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1994), pp. 378-379.

For more on vampires, culture, and religion, consult the direct link to the CESNUR Library's large special collection on vampires, book reviews, scholarly articles and more.

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Integrity and Suspicion in NRM Research

by Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi

In early May 1995, as Japanese law-enforcement authorities were collecting evidence linking the Aum Shinrikyo NRM [New Religious Movement] to the March 20 poison gas attack which killed 13 commuters, and preparing what they thought was a strong case, they discovered, to their utter surprise, that they were under attack from an unexpected direction. According to media reports, four Americans arrived in Tokyo to defend Aum Shinrikyo against charges of mass terrorism. Two of them were NRM scholars. According to these reports, they stated that Aum Shinrikyo could not have produced the gas used in the attack, and called on Japanese police not to "crush a religion and deny freedom" (Reid, 1995; Reader, 1995).

Reliable reports since 1995 have shown that Japanese authorities were actually not just overly cautious, but negligent and deferential, if not protective, regarding criminal activities by Aum, because of its status as an NRM. "Some observers wonder what took the Japanese authorities so long to take decisive action. It seems apparent that enough serious concerns had been raised about various Aum activities to warrant a more serious police inquiry prior to the subway gas attack" (Mullins, 1997, p. 321). The group can only be described as extremely violent and murderous. "Thirty-three Aum followers are believed to have been killed between...1988 and ...1995...Another twenty-one followers have been reported missing [and presumed dead]" (Mullins, 1997, p. 320). Among non-members, there have been 24 murder victims. One triple murder case in 1989 and another poison gas attack in 1994 which killed seven have been committed by the group, as well as less serious crimes which the police were not too eager to investigate (Beit-Hallahmi, 1998; Haworth, 1995; Mullins, 1997). So it is safe to conclude that religious freedom was not the issue in this case. Nor is it likely, as some Aum apologists among NRM scholars have claimed, that this lethal record (77 deaths on numerous occasions over seven years) and other non-lethal criminal activities were the deeds of a few rogue leaders. Numerous individuals must have been involved in, and numer-

ous others aware of, these activities.

Some NRM scholars have suggested that the trip to Japan, as reported in the media, caused the field an image problem (Reader, 1995). Let me make clear right away that my concern here is not with images, but with the reality of scholarship. I am afraid that in this case, as in many others, the reality may be actually worse than the image. How do we react to the Aum episode? Do we raise our eyebrows? Do we shrug our shoulders? Is it just an isolated case of bad judgment? Are we shocked by the alleged involvement of NRM researchers in this tragic story? Given the climate and culture of the NRM research community, and earlier demonstrations of support for NRMs in trouble, we are not completely surprised. Much of the discourse in NRM research over the past 20 years has been marked by a happy consensus on the question of the relations between NRMs and their social environment.

What should be the proper and desirable relationship between scholars and the groups they study? Naturally, this relationship must be problematic, marked by tension on both sides. No one likes to be under scrutiny of any kind, and we are all sensitive to the self-serving ways in which humans, scholars included, present themselves to others. A critical attitude and an interpretive bent are the marks of the scholar, who is unlikely to take messages from the subjects of his study at face value. Credibility must be negotiated and earned by both informants and scholars, and what is at issue here is the credibility of NRM research.

All of us, as religion scholars and members of the academic community, have our biases (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Robbins, 1983). Our differing ideological commitments do not prevent us from communicating and collaborating as colleagues. Scholars are expected to be sophisticated consumers of their colleagues' work. They detect error, bias, and oversight, and separate valuable gold nuggets from slag. In the study of religion, bias and religious commitments should not necessarily undermine scholarship; they may only set its limits (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989, 1996). Our conflicting biases should naturally lead to debates and controversy. It is indeed baffling when we experience in a particular research network the strange, deafening, silence of conformity. The level of conformity to the reigning consensus has been remarkable. Scholars in perfect agreement around a thorny issue are like the dog that didn't bark. They should make us curious, if not outright suspicious.

Origins of the Party Line

Something like a party line has developed among NRM scholars about the way NRMs are described and analyzed. This consensus is responsible for a new conformity which seems to put strict limits on researchers' curiosity. This it has also led to advocacy, and in the cases of Aum Shinrikyo and David Koresh, public expressions of support for an NRM in conflict with its environment. NRM researchers engaged in advocacy are expressing a feeling and a reality of partnership and collaboration with NRMs in a common cultural struggle.

Over the past 20 years, the NRM research community displayed a general agreement on a hierarchy of credibility (Becker, 1967), according to which self presentation by NRMs was epistemologically and logically superior to all outside accounts and observations. The party line has been that "...defectors are involved in either conscious or unconscious self-serving behavior" (Richardson, 1980, p. 247). (This is presumably unlike the behavior of NRM members and leaders, who are totally and utterly selfless). The NRM research community will give more credence to the claims of NRM members and leaders than to claims by former members, outside observers (e.g. the media), and government officials (especially law-enforcement officials). This has led to a pattern of collaboration with NRMs, reaching its culmination, and logical conclusion, in the Aum episode reported above.

The essence of the consensus has been described in a most elegant way by two leading sociologists of religion: "The pattern of various debates and positions adopted appear to represent something of a consensus that where there is a significant erosion of traditional religious liberties and/or litigation is likely to turn on evidence which conflicts with the prevailing corpus of knowledge represented by the professional societies, individual and collective activism is potentially appropriate" (Robbins & Bromley, 1991, p. 199). This article does not touch on the litigation issue, but only deals briefly with the "religious liberties" advocacy, or "activism".

"Activism": The Consensus in Action

Looking at the history of collaboration with NRMs over the past thirty years takes us from the curious to the bizarre. The consensus started developing back in the 1970s, when some NRMs were fighting for recogni-

tion and legitimacy. The mere fact of being defined as a religion, and recognized as a movement worthy of study, seemed like an achievement for some groups. For other groups, the "religion" label was crucial. As Greil (1996, p. 49) suggested, being considered a religious movement is "a cultural resource over which competing interest groups may vie..." giving "privileges associated in a given society with the religious label". Moreover, "the right to the religious label is a valuable commodity" (Greil, 1996, p. 52). Similarly, Barker (1991, p. 11) noted the "considerable economic advantages to be gained from being defined as a religion". By applying the religion label consistently and generously, NRM scholars provided support that was not forthcoming from any other quarters.

The Unificationists were among the first to appreciate the value of having professors on their side. Since the 1970s, they organized a variety of front organizations and held numerous conferences, best known among them were the Unity of Science conferences. At such conferences, academics from all over the world met to discuss what united them, most obviously the readiness to accept a free vacation, all expenses paid, from the Unification Church. Most academics attending the conferences were not religion scholars. Those who were became aware of their worth in the coin of legitimacy and respectability to the group. There was criticism of academics who were ready to provide recognition to the Unification Church by attending the conferences (Horowitz, 1978), but these critical voices were decisively ignored by NRM scholars. There is red thread that connects the cozy relationship with the Unification Church in the 1970s and the events of the 1990s. This thread does not express itself in the willingness to receive NRM money, but in the clear ideological commitment to defending NRMs regardless of the circumstances and the consequences. It seems that the operative consensus that started forming in the late 1970s was well in place by the early 1980s. Leading scholars in the field decided to take a stand in the propaganda war over the legitimacy and reputation of certain NRMs (or groups claiming to be NRMs, such as Scientology), and to work together with them in order to give them much needed public support. It was felt that in the struggle for legitimacy, anything perceived as harming the NRMs' public image should be avoided. A defensive discourse has grown to protect any seeming indiscretion or transgression.

Fifty years from now, when the archives are opened up and private letters read, future historians will be able to answer bet-

ter the questions raised here and explain the development of the late 20th century consensus among NRM scholars. In the meantime we can work only on the basis of public documents, but from time to time confidential documents see the light of day and provide additional insights. I have before me a piece of evidence which reveals significant collusion between researchers and NRMs. This is a confidential memorandum, dated December 20, 1989, and authored by an NRM researcher, who stated that he was writing on behalf of two other leading researchers, all of them sociologists. Copies of this document have been circulated by an anti-NRM group, and its authenticity is beyond any doubt. It is significant that this document has been sent to a long list of sociologists by email, and has been cited before. It is embarrassing to refer to a confidential memo written by a dear colleague, but no less embarrassing has been the experience of witnessing dear colleagues act as collaborators and shills for a variety of masquerading organizations.

This document reports on a series of meetings and activities involving several NRM scholars, NRM attorneys, NRM leaders, and some other scholars. Many future plans are discussed, most of which never materialized. The agenda and the commitments expressed are very clear. The memo proves beyond a shadow of a doubt, not only behind-the-scenes contacts between scholars and NRMs, but the coordinated effort on the part of leading NRM scholars to work with NRMs. What is striking is the clear sense in which the leading members of the NRM research network regarded NRMs as allies, not subjects of study. It seems that the scholars were more eager than the NRMs to lead the fight for NRM legitimacy.

"Our meetings with the members of the Unification Church confirmed our earlier impressions that ... their response is very substantially confined to ad hoc responses to crises. I pressed them on the question of whether it might be possible for the UC in collaboration with several other NRMs to raise a significant amount of money — no strings attached — to an independent group, which in turn, would entertain proposals and fund research on NRMs". NRMs were less than enthusiastic, the writer thought, and "The cooperative funding of the American Conference on Religious Freedom would appear to be about as far as they are prepared to go at this time" (Confidential, 1989, p. 4). In addition to the idea of creating an NRM-funded research organization, "...we spent a good deal of time considering whether the time might be right to import ...INFORM or create a US

organization that would perform a similar function...INFORM has taken a very significant step in neutralizing anti-cult movements in the UK" (Confidential, 1989, p. 5).

In 1992, The Association of World Academics for Religious Freedom (AWARE) which described itself (Lewis, 1994, p. 94) as "...an information center set up to propagate objective information about non-traditional religions", came on the scene. Each and every NRM scholar undoubtedly considers himself or herself an information center propagating objective information about non-traditional religions, so there must be some really good reasons for the creation of another such center. "The primary goal of AWARE is to promote intellectual and religious freedom by educating the general public about existing religions and cultures, including, but not limited to, alternative religious groups...AWARE also educates the scholarly community and the general public about the severe persecution that religious and cultural minorities experience ... and to support the United States government in its efforts to heal the prejudice that exists in our country and in the world" (Lewis, 1994, p. 214). This public agenda goes far beyond scholarship.

AWARE was the sponsor for three volumes which in themselves have been the source of controversy (Lewis, 1994; Lewis & Melton, 1994a; Lewis & Melton, 1994a). Balch & Langdon (1996) provide a sobering inside view of the fieldwork which led to the AWARE 1994 volume on CUT (Lewis & Melton, 1994). The most significant and symptomatic fact here is the participation by so many recognized scholars in this effort (cf. Balch, 1996). Similar acts of support have been noted in research conference ostensibly devoted to NRMs, where leaders and representatives of NRMs (or groups claiming such a label) were being treated not only as colleagues, but as partners in a common enterprise.

It is not a question of some loose canons on the margins of the research community. What we have is not an "activist" minority and a silent majority, but a supportive, collaborating majority. Our colleagues are entitled to many presumptions of innocence, but not just doubts but pieces of evidence are piling up. I personally feel embarrassed, ashamed, and betrayed. In light of what we have witnessed we are forced to re-read, our eyes fresh with suspicion, the whole corpus of NRM literature.

We may have to reconstruct our hierarchy of credibility (Becker, 1967). Recent and less recent NRM catastrophes help us realize that in every single case allegations by hostile outsiders and detractors have been closer to reality than any other accounts.

Ever since the Jonestown tragedy, statements by ex-members turned out to be more accurate than those of apologists and NRM researchers. The reality revealed in the cases of People's Temple, Rajneesh International, Vajradhatu, the Nation of Yahweh, the Branch Davidians, the Faith Assembly, Aum Shinrikyo, the Solar Temple, or Heaven's Gate is much more than unattractive; it is positively horrifying. In every case of NRM disasters over the past 50 years, starting with Krishna Venta (Beit-Hallahmi, 1993), we encounter a hidden world of madness and exploitation in a totalitarian, psychotic, group, whose reality is actually even worse than detractors' allegations.

The happy consensus, shared by colleagues I admire and to whom I will always be in debt, turns out to be, on closer examination, a rhetoric of advocacy, apologetics and propaganda. The advocacy and apologetics agenda creates an impoverished discourse, denying the madness, passion, and exploitation involved in NRMs, and leads to an intellectual dead end. The real issue is how a community of brilliant scholars committed itself to this kind of NRM advocacy.

The solution to our integrity problem lies only in a painfully open discussion and full disclosure; open discussion of our collective deficiencies and failings, and a full disclosure of all financial ties with all organizations. In legitimate academic work, financial support is gratefully acknowledged. If you have reasons to keep your benefactors unnamed, some may suspect that you've got something to hide. As scholars, we have not taken vows of chastity, poverty, or silence. Our only vow is to criticism, suspicion, and unfettered questioning. Being a little more suspicious will keep us all not only a little more honest, but probably better scholars.

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Amsterdam '97: scholars
or apologists?
The ICESNUR
International
Conference held in
Amsterdam, Holland,
on August 7-9, 1997

An unofficial and personal
report by Dr. Herman de

Tollenaere

[Reprinted from *De Groene Amsterdammer*
(August 13, 1997)]

Introduction

Usually, there are two rules about scholarly conferences on religion: they attract neither many people nor newspaper headlines. The eleventh international conference of the Italy-based CESNUR (Centre for the Study of New Religions) was no exception to the first rule. On the afternoon of its first day, it fitted comfortably into two small lecture-rooms on the eleventh floor of the big main building of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. A prominent Dutch Protestant, Abraham Kuyper, founded this university in the nineteenth century.

However, the second rule did not apply. National TV teletext paid attention. So did other media. I, for instance, was interviewed by provincial, national, and Dutch World Service radio. From 5-11 August, headlines blazed in most national and many local daily newspapers, some on front pages, some above big articles, some above big articles on front pages. Some of the headlines: "Vrije Universiteit hosts pro-cult conference", "Congress at Vrije Universiteit gets controversial because of neo-Nazi cult speaker", "Cult researchers blinded by their own empathy", "CESNUR should be more critical", "A congress about cults can never be quiet", "Scholar of religion De Tollenaere from Leiden: 'I had expected a quiet scientific congress'", and, finally: "Cult leader stands down".

New Acropolis

Why wasn't it "a quiet scientific congress"? One of the speakers scheduled to

take part was Maria Dolores Fernandez-Figares. Her subject was "New Acropolis". Dr R. Kranenborg, who organized the conference for the university, had never heard about Maria Dolores or New Acropolis. The [ground] rule for this conference is, he said, speaking *about* cults; not [speaking] *by* cults.

However, Ms Fernandez Figares turned out to be a leader of the group that was the subject of her speech. New Acropolis turned out to be not only a cult, but a cult accused of, e.g., neo-Nazism.

The occult organization New Acropolis was founded in 1957 by Jorge Livraga Rizzi, then a member of the Theosophical Society (not the Anthroposophical Society, as the Dutch daily *De Volkskrant* said) in Argentina. It spread to other South American countries and to Spain, while the dictator Franco still ruled. From there, it spread to other (mainly Southern) European countries. It has only four branches in the US. The most active one is in Miami; the three other ones are in Boston, Phoenix, and Seattle.

To outsiders, New Acropolis says that it reads tarot cards, studies innocent "philosophy", and does nice things like [sponsor] "nature walks". Their Internet web site contains bland propaganda, and their Miami branch offers a "free introductory class"; which, according to the small print on the same page, is not really free, but costs \$95 (\$75 for full-time students under 25). This reminds one of Hare Krishnas handing out books as "a free gift of God", and then saying that they are not free. Only if you know more about New Acropolis, from other sources, do their web site announcements about courses on Kung Fu and other "martial arts" sound alarming.

However, sources from many countries state, independently of one another:

- that New Acropolis claims that its leaders, like the founder Livraga, Mr. Schwarz, and Ms Gilardi, are "doctors" or "professors", while they are unable to prove this. The source of Mr Livraga's titles is the so-called International University Moctezuma, founded by the Spanish charlatan Guillermo Grau, who claims to rule a still existing Aztec empire. What business has a leader of an organization like New Acropolis, with a history of faked academic credentials, at an academic conference, one may ask.
- that New Acropolis has elite inner groups with black and brown uniforms (like Hitler's SS and SA) for male members, and uniforms in the blue colour of the troops of the dictator Franco for female members.

There are thinly disguised SS symbols on the black New Acropolis uniforms. Inner group members do a version of the Nazi salute, according to the picture from the members-only magazine for the New Acropolis Security Forces.

- that New Acropolis founder Livraga wanted homosexuals to be put into concentration camps (see Antoine Faivre, "Les courants ésotériques et le rapport. Les exemples de Nouvelle Acropole et de la Rose-Croix d'Or (Lectorium Rosicrucianum)", in Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton (eds.), *Pour en finir avec les sectes* (Paris: Dervy, 1996), end-note 1, pp. 244-245).
- that New Acropolis organized a conference in Lyon, France, in 1987, jointly with leaders of Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National, the extreme Right racist party in France.
- that mayors in towns like Rennes in France want to ban NA public meetings.
- that New Acropolis founder Livraga stated that the wrong side had won the Second World War.
- that New Acropolis claimed that "democracy must be overthrown, or must die".
- that NA, a supposedly religious or philosophical organization, supported [General Augusto] Pinochet's bloody [1973] coup d'état in Chile.
- that Livraga organized target practice with firearms for NA members (illegal in European countries which ban private armed forces).
- that New Acropolis members bombed the mosque in Romans near Valence in France.
- that New Acropolis was very intertwined with the neo-Nazi terrorists of Westland New Post in Belgium in the 1980s (same address, largely the same members).
- that the Belgian NA member Marcel Barbier went to jail for murdering two people in the Brussels suburb of Anderlecht.
- that NA members in Spain physically attacked anti-fascists.
- that on 30 April 1994 the Madrid police raided New Acropolis headquarters and seized many stolen works of art there (See

NRC-Handelsblad [May 7, 1993]; and *International Herald Tribune* [May 4, 1993]: "Spanish police seize precious antique art works")

One may read more in, for instance, *Neue Akropolis. Sekte mit braunen Flecken* (Hamburg, 1997). See *Halt* (Belgian anti-fascist review) 2 (1988); and *Le Monde*, various issues.

Participants (including yours truly) asked the conference organizers not to share a platform with a leader of this kind of organization. After some hesitation, on the eve of the conference, the organizers decided not to let Ms Fernandez-Figares speak. She packed her bags, unable to score her propaganda point of acceptance among bona fide scientists. Earlier on, a Frenchman who thought he would be able to propagate his extreme rightist views to the conference had already been turned away.

So, were all problems solved? Maybe this might be premature to claim. Let us look further at CESNUR and its conference.

CESNUR

CESNUR is a private organization. Its headquarters are in the lawyer's office in Turin of its founder, the Italian Massimo Introvigne. It studies organizations which others may call "sects" or "cults", but which it calls "new religions". Some of these studies may not be critical enough. A book, published by CESNUR in 1996, contained a not thoroughly critical article on New Acropolis, based largely on oral statements by New Acropolis leaders.

One sometimes finds a "doctrine only" approach to new religious movements in CESNUR. This approach may work well for one book, for one individual, or for several individuals doing research. However, it can never work for the sociology of religion or for the history of religion, as a whole. One should also study an organization's finances; its official and unofficial power structures; its relationship to its economic, social, and political context. A "doctrine only" approach to, e.g., Scientology may lead, and in practice does lead in cases, to a far more rose-coloured picture than a "finances also" approach.

Often, outsiders criticize some people in CESNUR for having overly close personal and/or financial ties to problematic religious organizations.

CESNUR leaders have testified on behalf of groups like Scientology and the Unification Church (Moonies) in court cases. On 5 August 1997, the Dutch nation-



al daily *Trouw* wrote that the Californian J. Gordon Melton, "after the attacks [with sarin gas in the Tokyo subway] by Aum Shinri Kyo [the cult of the "Supreme Truth"] in 1995, went to Japan to support the cult against the 'unjust treatment' and 'religious oppression' by the police. The cult paid for his journey." That Aum Shinri Kyo had paid for Melton's journey "was not really sensible when we look back at it," Dr Kranenborg said in *Trouw* on 8 August. Gordon Melton, by the way, was not at the Amsterdam conference as planned. He was busy preparing a conference on Dracula in Los Angeles, at which a thousand people were expected.

The beginning of the con- er- ence

In his opening speech, Massimo Introvigne said that the New Acropolis representative would neither speak nor be present. He did not mention NA's controversial politics. Later, he conceded that New Acropolis 10 or 20 years ago was anti-Semitic; but not any more, he thought. It had played a role as a buttress to military dictators in Argentina, but not as big a role as many Roman Catholics.

Introvigne criticized attacks on new religious movements in the press: "Strong persuasion methods are not a crime." He also criticized articles in the media that said CESNUR and he were not being objective, but rather had a rightist bias. Those critics identified, for instance, his links to a right-wing pressure group within the Catholic Church, Alleanza Cattolica, which was itself linked to rightist non-Catholics. Introvigne described himself as politically centrist, a Christian Democrat. Later, I asked him: "Nowadays, the Christian Democrats call themselves the Italian Popular Party, don't they?" "No, I am not with them," Introvigne said. "They are Left and we are Right. I am in the Centro Cristiano Democratico." The CCD is a small group, a right-wing break-away from the old Christian Democratic party. It is part of the rightist alliance of the media tycoon [Silvio] Berlusconi and the neo-Fascist leader [Gianfranco] Fini. Within that alliance, the CCD has a mere 3% of the vote, versus about 15-20% each for the Berlusconi and neo-Fascists. So, being any Christian, or Democrat, or Centrist countervailing power to the hard right is not easy there.

Next, Eileen Barker of the London School of Economics spoke. In the 1980s, she had warned that people doing research

on new religions may tend to become part of what they investigate. One may ask whether later she has always maintained the sense of critical independence inherent in this view though. She describes a conversion towards a, "some may say, "pro-cult" viewpoint as a "revelation" and as her "road to Damascus," in reference to what Saint Paul had experienced when converting from Judaism to Christianity (Jean Duhaime, "Rencontre avec Eileen BARKER. Pour soulager cette souffrance inutile. La Centre INFORM de Londres", *Ouvertures* (Spring 1997), p. 2). Of course, no one will deny Ms Barker or anyone else the right to have religious visions and revelations. However, it is not always easy to combine these with scientific objectivity, which requires a critical distance from one's subject.

Critics allege that this distance was lacking in Ms Barker's involvement in the Moonie front organization, the International Conference for the Unity of the Sciences. Its conferences are usually about the theme "Science and Absolute Values", meaning the values of Mr Moon, the Unification Church founder. Ms Barker contributed, for instance, a lecture on Social Science and Dramatic Art to the ICUS conference in Atlanta, Georgia, according to the printed program of that conference.

In her lecture in Amsterdam, Eileen Barker claimed that the Moonies did no harm: "How can a few Moonies subvert a country?" Someone from the audience remarked that in The Netherlands there are also few Moonies. However, their leader is an important aide to the leader of the extremist racist party in parliament, the equivalent of the National Front of Le Pen in France (where Moonies play a similar role). Ms Barker replied that she did not agree with racism, but did not go into the Unification Church's role in this.

One lady handed out orange writing-cases, made especially for this conference, containing propaganda leaflets, to all conference participants. She was a member of The Family (formerly the Children of God). Introvigne told me about their founder David Berg, aka Moses David, aka Mo: "The Family has admitted in a court case that they were founded by a paedophile. However, one cannot go on about that all the time."

During the whole conference, cult members swarmed like flies around the assembled scholars, hoping that one of them might write a favourable report on their organization. One could note Moonies like Dan Fefferman (all the way from the US), Harald Janisch (from Austria), and Peter Ladstätter (from Russia). One could encounter Scientologists and Hare Krishnas.

A blonde lady of the Brahma Kumaris also attended...

Heaven's Gate

In the evening, the organizers had added a special panel on Heaven's Gate to the programme. At first, some videos were shown. Then, Introvigne spoke for much longer than the twenty minutes which other speakers were allotted at this conference. His contribution contained many interesting details, but a controversial conclusion. He regretted that J. Gordon Melton, who knew Heaven's Gate leader Applewhite personally, was not present.

Introvigne mentioned how the mental patient Applewhite had founded his movement. His co-founder, the nurse Bonnie Nettles, was a prominent member of the Theosophical Society in Houston, Texas, and wrote the astrology column for a local newspaper. Applewhite did not have to worry about money, as one of his members was a millionaire. Heaven's Gate owned two firms: Higher Source and Computer Nomads.

Introvigne concluded that the collective suicide of Heaven's Gate had been an act of free will. This concept may be at least as problematic as the opposite concept of "brainwashing", which Introvigne rejects. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch theologian Franciscus Gomarus questioned whether there was unlimited free will. In the nineteenth century, people as diverse as Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim, a founding father of the field of sociology, questioned the concept of free will in societies full of pressures. Durkheim's *On Suicide* is especially relevant here, as it points out that a superficially extremely individual act like suicide is socially conditioned. A twentieth-century sociologist like Peter Berger agrees. One should also look at the experiments of a psychologist like Milgram, who made people do things which they certainly did not intend to originally; and at the work of his colleagues, Lifton and Schein.

In a group like Heaven's Gate, authoritarian pressure is very much stronger than in society in general. Their leader Applewhite is on record as saying that a good Heaven's Gate follower is like a dog, obeying his Shepherd (i.e., Applewhite). One could see some results of this in one of the videos shown at the conference: the video suicide note of an elderly lady in Heaven's Gate. A higher ranking Heaven's Gate member, keeping off-camera, with an assertive voice, handed this old lady "her" note with "her" suicide statement; and announced what she would say. With a

trembling voice, the old woman read out the pre-ordained message about how very happy she was to go to her Heavenly Father. According to Introvigne, one could not compare "voluntary" suicide by Heaven's Gate to "voluntary" confessions in show trials in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, since, he said, there had been no physical torture involved. Neither, one may add, had there been in the case of all the individual confessions in the 1930's trials.

In contrast to Dr Introvigne, a relative of a dead Heaven's Gate's member concluded on British television: "It really was one suicide [Applewhite's], and 38 murders." One should note here that laws in many countries differentiate between murder and manslaughter, etc. Also, insane persons are often judged differently from sane ones. It is hard to deny a nucleus of truth in the statement, however. Constance A. Jones from the US told that she had been present at a Heaven's Gate propaganda meeting. The idea that she might have joined still scared her...

The most suggestive title of the evening session was "The Great European Cult Scare". Introvigne attacked the idea that new religious movements could "brain-

Dagblad of 6 August 1997, Kranenborg said that (apart from Ms Fernandez-Figares of New Acropolis, whose speech did not go ahead) "no people who are themselves members of cults would address the conference." Some people might question the accuracy of this prediction as far as the panel on Gurdjieff was concerned. As I was not there, I will not comment on it. I will rather report on something I did attend. To Dr Kranenborg's surprise, as he later wrote me, the *Leidsch Dagblad* statement proved to be incorrect on the last morning of the conference. Kranenborg wrote that he would have, if possible, preferred to prevent what happened then. However, one can hardly stop a speech once it has started.

Eileen Barker from the chair announced the next speaker, who was to give a talk about "the VPM wars in German-Speaking Europe". However, she admitted she did "not know what the acronym VPM stands for."

That was not surprising, as this was a conference on religions. And the two representatives of the VPM who addressed the meeting claimed that the VPM was not religious. One of them was their lawyer in the "wars" (court cases) alluded to in the title

The Jung Cult, claims this about C.G. Jung. One might say similar things about Wilhelm Reich. If the Menschenkenner were indeed the real followers of Adler, one might look to see if this applied to them as well.

However, the VPM's history shows that the academic psychologist Adler was not really their founding father. That was Friedrich Liebling, a non-academic amateur psychologist. Liebling claimed he could make a "new man" through his controversial therapy. This "new man" would be free from the "psychic distortions caused by the state, religion, and education". Since the 1960s, Liebling advocated living in communes for his devotees. In these communes, people with psychic problems had to "confess their sins" to their therapists. These "sins" became known to more people than just the therapist-"confessor". They might be used against "sinners" in case of conflict. Similar things happened in the Church Universal and Triumphant (where one actually speaks of "confessing") and in Scientology (where people speak of "auditing", among other things, their sins committed in a former life, millions of years ago).

wash" people. Italy, he said, used to have an anti-brainwashing law dating from the days of Mussolini. One must remark here that, at least in the strict sense, the word "brainwashing" arose in the wake of the 1950 Korean war. Mussolini died in 1945.

Boris Falikov from Russia then discussed East European movements like the White Brotherhood. Another Russian, Marat Shterin, a doctoral student of Eileen Barker's in London, discussed a court case in Moscow brought against a Russian author who had attacked new religious movements like the Moonies. Professor Johannes Aagaard from Aarhus university in Denmark, who had also been at that trial, reacted, saying he thought Shterin's description of the trial was politically biased...

The last day of the conference: the Menschenkenner

According to the Dutch daily *Leidsch*

of the speech. The other read a paper by Robert Prantner (himself not present). VPM, it turned out, stands for Verein zur Förderung Psychologischen Menschenkenntnis. So, it claims to be an organization for scientific psychology. It is popularly known as Die Menschenkenner (Menschenkenntnis = Knowledge of humans). It is a rather aggressive, closed organization for political pop psychology, in some respects not unlike Scientology.

The VPM orator claimed that the movement based itself on the psychoanalyst Alfred Adler (1870-1937), a pupil of Sigmund Freud. That the politically very rightist Menschenkenner claim the Marxist Adler as their founding father may point to a shortage of attractive historical role models in their part of the political spectrum, especially in German history. Anyway, Adler is dead. So, he cannot protest about the use of his name. Recent psychologists are rather critical about the scientific level of Sigmund Freud, and especially of his pupils. Some of them inspired religious cults rather than psychology. A recent book by Richard Noll,

Liebling had some sympathy for muddle-headed forms of anarchism that were fashionable in those hippy days. However, after the 1960s, quite a few hippies threw away their flowers and beads and donned yuppie business suits. Sometimes, their politics moved to the right as well — very far to the right, in some cases. In the case of Liebling's devotees, Liebling's death and succession as guru by Ms Annemarie Buchholz-Kaiser accelerated this process. The communes continued. The public confessions of sins continued, nearly all of them recorded in writing or on audio tape. However, they were now used in the context of ever-increasing authoritarianism and political paranoia directed against non-members. The pop psychologists also started to claim competence to deal with AIDS.

Critics call the Menschenkenner a "psycho[therapy] cult". After a complaint by the Menschenkenner, a German judge decided that the critics have the right to do this. The VPM tries to win over conservative adherents by launching cam-

paings against any tolerance whatsoever for marijuana and against the use of methadon in anti-heroin addiction therapies in hospitals. In this, they are similar to the Narconon program of Scientology.

The Menschenkenner attitude to psychology shows similarities to, as well as differences from, Scientology. Scientology calls itself "the modern science of mental health". To be recognized as such, it needs to depict its unwelcome competitors, psychology and psychiatry, as satanic conspiracies which should be destroyed. The Menschenkenner, on the other hand, rather than attacking scientific psychology as such, claim to be the real scientific psychologists themselves. Their attack is against all "other" psychologies. They campaign, e.g., against conflict psychology or Gestalt in education.

The executive of the German Association of Professional Psychologists, the Berufsverband Deutscher Psychologen (BDP), attacks the VPM because of its "abuse of so called psychology...and so called psychotherap...E.g., when parts of audio recordings of group therapy sessions, in which members bare their inner-

of law establish the truth. The Menschenkenner often label individuals who criticize them as Red Army Faction terrorists or drug dealers. At the Amsterdam meeting, they did this to a female member of the German parliament, Ms Jelk. Of course, Ms Jelk, not being present, could not defend herself. They singled her out because she had proposed that the German parliamentary commission on cults investigate the VPM. The Menschenkenner label various local and regional governments which criticize them, e.g., those in western Germany and the canton of Zurich in Switzerland, as successors of the former German Democratic Republic. They depict one opponent, the Federal German Ministry for Women and the Family (run by the conservative CDU party) as carrying on where the Stasi, the former secret service of the former Communist East German government, left off.

According to the VPM speaker at the Amsterdam CESNUR conference, these present-day governments are carrying on an old plan: in the early 1980s, the Ministry of the Interior of the GDR had

what they claim to be, they should take their case to organizations and conferences of psychologists, not to organizations and conferences about religion.

As for my provisional conclusions about the Menschenkenner: why was this paranoid political presentation by a movement, calling itself apolitical and areligious, being presented at a scientific conference about religions? Why did the accused individuals not have the right to defend themselves? Maybe at some future CESNUR conference, Albanian managers of pyramid business firms will try to speak. Or managers of American pyramid business firms, like Amway/Multi Level Marketing. Or their lawyers. They will say that the press has compared them unfairly to cult leaders. They will say that they are nice honest businessmen, victims of the "anti-cult movement".

As for my provisional conclusion about the conference and CESNUR: we certainly need organizations for scientific research on new and not-so-new religious movements. Such organizations should be open to diverse approaches. However, sometimes one gets the

most soul, are abused to discipline dissidents, to silence them, or even to blackmail them, then this is a clear violation of the therapists' duty not to divulge what they know, as named in criminal law. It also proves the VPM's contemptuous attitude to human beings." (See the *Informationen Deutscher Psychologen* of June 16, 1992.)

The organization of German Adlerian psychologists, the DGIP (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Individualpsychologie e. V.) dissociated itself from the Menschenkenner as well. In a declaration by its executive, published in *Psychologie heute* in May 1994, it called them "sektenhaft" (cultish) and "in strong opposition to the scientific tendency of [Adlerian] individual psychology."

As in the case of other critics, like Lutheran church people, the Menschenkenner sue organizations of academic psychologists. They lose the court cases. However, like Scientologists, they seem to sue to bully opponents rather than to have a court

plan for attacking their political opponents. One may well wonder what this has to do with the Menschenkenner in 1997. Now, there is no more GDR. The GDR report did not name the Menschenkenner. They did not exist in the GDR then. They did not exist anywhere then. The VPM was founded in 1986. And how could a supposedly non-political organization be a political opponent?

I asked the Menschenkenner representatives repeatedly, how many of their members had university degrees in psychology; and how many had not. To this, I got no reply. Their reply was that they had many university people as members, but did not say just how many, or whether these had studied psychology or unrelated disciplines. When I asked again about psychology, they said that they had 700 members.

They also did not reply to the question, which I asked repeatedly, about their relationship to organizations of professional psychologists. If they are

impression that certain people are blurring the lines between a legitimate scientific organization and an apologetic political lobbying group for those movements.

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